ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

CO-CREATION OF MEANING IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERFORMANCE IN DRAMATHERAPY

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"My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others."

C.S. Lewis

"The strength of great works really consists in their catalystic effect: they open doors for us,
set in motion the machinery of our self-awareness."

Jerzy Grotowski

"Listen:
In the silence between there is music;
In the spaces between there is story.

Pay attention:
We are listening each other into being."

Sally Atkins

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

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The research aims to investigate how the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy can be described as emerging from a relational and embodied encounter between performers and spectators (or witnesses). The study considers how the different levels of interaction within the relational space of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy inform and influence the way in which meaning is created, and the experiences of those involved. The study responds to a need in autobiographical performance research to analyse and understand the processes that enable a connection between the staged experience of the performer and the lived experience of the witness, and how these create new meanings for both. The research therefore aims at exploring the mechanisms underlying and contributing to a process of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy.

The research reflects an interdisciplinary approach that brings together theoretical and empirical developments in the fields of dramatherapy, theatre and performance studies, phenomenology and literary studies. The research adopts a multi-method methodological framework that combines performance as research and relational phenomenological research.

The findings of the research reveal complex relational dynamics and different levels of intersubjective relationships within the shared space of autobiographical performance, and their impact on the meaning making process. The findings show a reciprocal relationship between the role of the performer and the witness, and the way in which they co-author and complete their respective experiences and their meaning. As part of that dynamic, the research unveils the significance of embodied and pre-reflective processes in the production of meaning. Finally, the research shows how aesthetic processes in autobiographical performances regulate the transformational potential of the encounter between performers and spectators.

The research suggests that the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy is located at the intersection between aesthetic, embodied and intersubjective processes that reflect different dimensions of co-creation within the shared space of the performance. It suggests how the shared space of autobiographical performance creates opportunities for individuals to better understand themselves and others in dialogue and in relation with one another.

Key words: autobiographical performance, dramatherapy, meaning, co-creation, interdisciplinarity, intersubjectivity, audience, witness, performance as research, phenomenology

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Structure of chapter:

1.1. Introduction to the research

The subject of this research is the field of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy. It is a study that proposes to investigate the production of meaning in autobiographical performance by particularly focusing on the relationship between performer and spectator.

The 'point of entry' (Trimingham, 2002, p.57) of the research reflects a personal and subjective experience that indirectly shaped the direction of the inquiry, as well as specific interests in areas of theory and practice in dramatherapy that directly led to the formulation of the research questions.

My personal experience over the last twenty years has been to live and work in a country other than the one in which I was born. This permanent state of living in a different cultural and social environment, paradoxically created in me an impermanent sense of identity and

belonging. I found myself being neither here nor there, but in an internal in-between space whereby transience turned into a way of being. I became interested in these liminal spaces of existence, how they reflect some form of separation, estrangement, loss and longing, but also how they create significant possibilities for renewed ways of engaging with oneself and others. I realised that the stage in performance and theatre was also a transitional space whereby stories of ruptures, conflicts and reparations could be voiced and maybe better understood. Moreover, that space could facilitate significant transformation, not solely for the performer but also for the spectator as witness of an experience that may find resonance with their own and help find a glimpse of sameness behind the differences that separate. I brought to the study a set of beliefs and values that uphold how a shared humanity is built on an ability to engage with others in dialogue, and how the performance space is an essential medium to facilitate an understanding of ourselves in relation to others.

I embarked on this research as a practicing dramatherapist with a particular interest in autobiographical performance, and how it can be envisaged as a relational space of encounter, dialogue and transformation. I started reflecting on this question as I delivered part of the module in autobiographical performance as an invited lecturer on the MA programme in Dramatherapy at Anglia Ruskin University between 2011 and 2016. It seemed important to understand autobiographical performance by considering the context of performance, and the significance of the relationship between performer and spectator on the production of the performance itself and of its meaning (Heddon, 2013). As Miller and Taylor wrote, autobiographical performance is 'a unique performance situation' (Miller and Taylor, 2006, p.185) characterised by 'the direct communication of the *personal* between the performer and the spectator' (in italic in the text; ibid., p.169). This suggests how the relation between self and other, as performer and spectator or vice-versa, is at the very heart of autobiographical performance, and how they both inform one another through a shared moment of encounter characterised by their embodied co-presence. It is that singular relational aspect of autobiographical performance that I was interested to research and that constitutes the foundation of this study.

These initial considerations reflect larger theoretical debates on the nature of consciousness, intersubjectivity and otherness that also represent essential underpinnings of this research, and that have been particularly explored in the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, psychoanalysis and linguistics. The complexity of these debates exceeds the remit of this

study, but they are nevertheless important to refer to as they effected developments in the fields of psychotherapy (Mitchell, 2000; Nolan, 2012; DeYoung, 2003) and performance studies (Fischer-Lichte, 2016; 2008) that have important bearings on this study.

The question of how consciousness is constituted has been significantly influenced in Western philosophy by the way in which René Descartes (1596-1650) propounded the idea of the cogito to describe the cognitive capacities of individuals to think about and reflect on themselves (Descartes, 1988). This is the foundation of the Cartesian ego which is essentially an 'independent and self-sufficient locus of experience' (de Quincey, 2000, p.138) autonomous from all external reality. This results in the formulation of a human subject detached from others, and whose knowledge derives purely from reasoning faculties produced from within. If this philosophical tradition still reverberates up to the present time, not least through the hegemonic position of individualism in the social discourse, it has been called into question by the emergence of a paradigm that postulates, as the philosopher Francis Jacques puts it, 'a relational conception of personal identity' (Jacques, 1991, p.57). This position has been notably upheld by philosophers such as Martin Buber (1970; 2002), Emmanuel Levinas (1989; 1969), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2009; 1968), and Mikhail Bakhtin (1986; 1990). Despite the differences that exist between these thinkers who also belong to different lineages of philosophical and spiritual traditions, they converge in representing the 'second-person perspective' into the study of consciousness (de Quincey, 2000, p.141). This perspective most notably recognises the importance of intersubjective relationships in the emergence of consciousness and subjectivity. As de Quincey writes, 'intersubjectivity refers to how the experience or consciousness of participating subjects is influenced and conditioned by their mutual interaction and engagement' (ibid., p.139).

What is most important to highlight is the way in which otherness is viewed as 'a constituent of subjective experiences' (Coelho and Figueiredo, 2003, p.199), as had already been suggested by early and more recent findings in psychoanalysis (Winnicott, 1971; Klein, 1987; Trevarthen and Aitken, 2001). The capacity of the subject to know oneself, from infancy and beyond, is inexorably dependent on and intertwined with others. Otherness is no longer a question to be considered as external to subjectivity, but rather as part of it, and profoundly inseparable from our ontology. Far from being irreconcilable and estranged from one another, self and other co-participate in the construction of their respective subjectivity, and in their respective search for meaning. Bakhtin most notably recognized the role of

otherness and difference in the production of subjectivity by arguing about the limits of 'I-for-myself' (Bakhtin, 1990, p.24), and the ability of the subject to reflect on itself. In the words of Bakhtin, the outsideness of the other provides an 'excess of seeing' (ibid., p.22) that completes the partial visibility of the self to itself and participates in the emergence of its consciousness. As Bakhtin writes,

> 'a meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closeness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings' (Bakhtin, 1986, p.7).

1.2. Relevance of the research to the field of dramatherapy

These theoretical underpinnings have found a resonance in the field of dramatherapy with a number of authors to whom this study is indebted and whose writings have guided the research. Roger Grainger (2014) argues that theatre is a relational experience between those performing and those in the audience. He describes how theatre 'crystallises an experience of betweenness that is creative of personhood' (Grainger, 2005b, p.8). He also suggests how the arts, theatre and performance are not solely forms of human inquiry, but also vehicles for inquiry (Grainger, 1999). Phil Jones (2007) identifies witnessing as one of the core processes in dramatherapy and discusses the effect of the active presence and engagement of an external other on the therapeutic process. He also discusses the relevance of philosophical debates on the nature of identity and selfhood to the theory and practice of dramatherapy, and how 'the self is formed through relationship with expression and connection with others' (Jones, 2008, p.230). Nisha Sajnani (2016) considers relational processes within the performance space in dramatherapy. She also describes how the core process of witnessing contributes to change and transformation in 'performance oriented dramatherapy' (Sajnani, 2010, p.190). Salvo Pitruzzella (2009) argues about the role of the audience as agent of authorisation in performance and theatre. He also suggests a dramatic paradigm in dramatherapy based on intersubjective and relational processes inherent to theatre (Pitruzzella, 2017).

This research is firmly located in this lineage of theory, practice and research in dramatherapy. The relevance of the research to the field of dramatherapy can be described as follows:

1. It is an investigation into the potentialities and values of autobiographical performance as a way of understanding oneself in relation to others, and as a catalyst for change and healing.

2. It is an investigation into the processes underlying and leading to the production and creation of autobiographical performances and their meaning.

3. It is an inquiry into different core processes at work in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, most notably those of witnessing, embodiment, therapeutic performance process and transformation (Jones, 1996; 2012b).

4. it is an investigation into a specific aspect of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy by means of performance as a mode of artistic inquiry generating particular forms of knowledge (Sajnani, 2015).

1.3. Dramatherapy research: between inter-disciplinarity and inner-disciplinarity

In his reflection on the next developmental phase of dramatherapy research, Jones argues in favour of interdisciplinary research that translates 'the relevance and innovative possibilities of contact between different fields or areas of knowledge' (Jones, 2012b, p.135). Jones also suggests how interdisciplinarity can effectively address 'the complexities for dramatherapy research positioned on the boundaries of different domains and disciplines' (Jones, 2015, p.88).

The research subject of this thesis is located at the intersection between different academic and theoretical fields. It is interdisciplinary in the way in which it 'combines components of two or more disciplines in the search or creation of new knowledge, operations, or artistic expressions' (Nissani, 1997, p.203). In accordance with the theoretical premises presented above, the research aims at developing a dialogue between different fields of expertise and knowledge, essentially between dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies, in order

to enhance the research process, deepen the understanding of its object of study, and increase the depth of analysis. The interdisciplinary nature of the research will be reflected in the critical discussion of the existing literature, the epistemological and methodological frameworks, and the discussion of the findings.

At the same time, if interdisciplinarity is viewed as a way of preventing the insularity of dramatherapy research, Jones also stresses the critical importance of 'inner-disciplinarity' (Jones, 2015, p.91) as a form of dialogue within the discipline of dramatherapy. As already stressed above, this research is located in a particular lineage of theory, practice and research in dramatherapy. This lineage will be explored further in the discussion on the context of the research, the methodological framework, and the implications of the study for further research.

1.4. Definition of terms

The following terms will be commonly referred to in this thesis. Their definition clarifies how they are being understood in the particular context of this study. They will be discussed further in the following chapter that will review key research areas relevant to the research.

1.4.1. Co-creation

The concept of co-creation has gained much attention over the last fifteen years, most predominantly in the fields of business and marketing studies (Saarijärvi, Kannan and Kuusela, 2013), and educational research (Philips and Napan, 2016). In this study, it is a concept that was intentionally chosen as a way of exploring whether and how it can describe the production of meaning in autobiographical performance. The choice of such a concept from the start of the research, confers to the study a particular orientation that will constitute a point for reflection throughout.

A distinction can be made between two different approaches of what constitutes co-creation. In the first instance, it is referred to as a means or strategy to a specific end, such as social innovation or market value, by 'co-opting the skills and creativity of individuals' (Ind and Coates, 2013, p.92). In the second instance, it describes a process that is an end in itself, a

form of knowledge emerging from certain conditions in given contexts. It is to this latter approach that co-creation will be referred to in this research. It is defined as a process of co-discovery through interaction, dialogue and experimentation (Shotter, 2006) that generates 'new ways of seeing the world and leads to the opportunity for self-development' (Ind and Coates, 2013, p.92).

1.4.2. Meaning

This study is an investigation into the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy. Its purpose is not to examine what meaning is, but rather to investigate where it is located and how it is produced in the context of autobiographical performance. In the context of this research, meaning is regarded as teleological rather than archaeological, in the sense that it reflects a process of creating and opening up possibilities rather than searching for and digging up hidden truths (Langdridge, 2007).

The working definition of meaning that guides this research is based on the model devised by Wong (2012), for whom meaning is constituted of four elements: purpose, understanding, responsible action and enjoyment or evaluation. The definition of meaning in this thesis will refer to the conscious act of understanding, structuring and integrating aspects of personal experience in a given context.

1.4.3. Autobiographical performance

Autobiographical performance refers to a particular theatre form that has found applications in the field of dramatherapy as a structure for self-development, self-reflection and therapeutic change (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016). Despite a variety of practices within the fields of performance and dramatherapy, autobiographical performance, in this study, will consistently refer to the performed presentation for an audience of material from personal experience as lived by the person of the performer (Miller and Taylor, 2006).

1.4.4. Spectator and witness

This research proposes to particularly focus on the effect of the relationship between performer and spectator on the production of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy

and of its meaning. It is an investigation into what constitutes, according to Peter Brook (1990), an act of theatre in its most essential form: someone walking across an empty space watched by someone else.

The place and role of the spectator and the audience have been widely analysed in theatre and performance studies (Bennett, 1997; Rokem, 2002; Wake, 2009; Fischer-Lichte, 2016). In the dramatherapy literature, the observing role of an audience watching has been described in terms of witnessing (Jones, 1996). Jones defines witnessing as 'the act of being an audience to others and to oneself' (Jones, 2007, p.101) particularly in the context of dramatherapy group work. The witness reflects a position of 'participant-observer' (Jones, 1993, p.48) that is actively engaged in the production of the therapeutic process and of its meaning. It is that definition of the witness that I mainly allude to in this thesis, notwithstanding that it wasn't directly formulated in the context of performance-based work, and that it doesn't make a clear distinction between the terms of witness, spectator or audience, but rather refers to them interchangeably. For the purpose of clarity, I will refer to the term 'audience' to describe a collective of spectators or witnesses, and to the term 'spectator' or 'witness' to describe an individual member of the audience.

1.5. Preliminary research aims

In the light of the above, the following preliminary research aims have been identified. These aims will be refined following a careful and critical discussion of the literature within different fields of knowledge in the following chapter.

1. To investigate how the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy emerges from a relational and embodied encounter between performers and witnesses within the shared space of performance.

2. To investigate how the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy can be described as a co-creation.

3. To investigate the implications of the study for dramatherapy research, theory and practice.

1.6. Thesis structure

The thesis is structured in six different chapters.

Following this introductory first chapter, chapter 2 will provide a critical review of the literature closely related to the specific object of this research outlined in the opening paragraph of this introduction. Particular attention will be given to literature on autobiographical performance in the fields of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies. This chapter will also outline the epistemological framework of the research.

Chapter 3 will present the methodological framework that reflects a multi-method design combining performance as research and relational-centred phenomenological research. This chapter will provide a rationale for the choice of the methodologies, a description of the research design including the selection of the research participants, the research ethical framework, the different methods of data collection, and the design of the performance workshop. It will also present the overall strategy for the analysis of the research data.

Chapter 4 will consist in the first part of the analysis of the research data and the identification of preliminary findings. This chapter will also present two creative research outputs as part of the performance as research methodology: a film detailing the individual process of the research participants, and a video recording of a reflective performance of my individual process as researcher. Chapter 5 will present a more detailed analysis of the preliminary findings based on an original model of method of data analysis juxtaposing different levels of experience within the research. This will constitute the basis for a critical and in-depth discussion of the final research findings. Finally, chapter 6 will conclude the research by providing a summary of its main conclusions, evaluating its outcomes, and discussing its limitations. It will also consider the implications of the study for the theory and practice of dramatherapy, as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Structure of chapter:

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2.1. Outline

This chapter critically reviews and discusses the existing literature and research around the specific object of investigation in this thesis, with a view to identifying current gaps in the relevant fields of knowledge, outlining the research aims, and formulating the research questions. The chapter concludes with an outline of the epistemological framework that clarifies the adopted theoretical approach of the research. This framework reflects how knowledge and meaning are located at the intersection of intersubjective and aesthetic relationships within the shared space of autobiographical performance.

The literature is reviewed in two main fields of knowledge that reflect the interdisciplinarity of the research: the field of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, and the field of autobiographical performance in theatre and performance studies. Emphasis is given to a critical investigation of relational processes and meaning making within these different fields of knowledge, in accordance with the preliminary research aims suggested in the introductory chapter. As far as possible, the review examines examples of published evidence and empirical research in the different fields of knowledge[1].

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were adopted for the review of the context of the research.

Inclusion criteria:

- research and studies published in the last 20 years (from 1993 onwards) with the exception of key reference texts,
- research and studies mainly with a focus on autobiographical performance based on the definition provided in the introductory chapter,
- research published in the English language.

[1] The review of the existing literature results from a systematic search of the following database: PsycINFO, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, CINHAL, Project Muse, JSTOR, SAGE Journals Online, Wiley Online Library, IngentaConnect, and EThOS. In addition, other search engines such as Google Scholar, Academia.edu and ResearchGate were also consulted. Other non-literary sources were also accessed through internet platforms such as Vimeo and YouTube to examine examples of performance practice related to the object of the study.

Exclusion criteria:

- research and studies that are not directly focused on autobiographical performance although they might refer to or be based on biographical accounts, and that do not meet the criteria of the definition of autobiographical performance as outlined in the introductory chapter[2]. The literature review does not therefore include the following theatre forms for not meeting the full criteria: ritual theatre (Schrader, 2012), narradrama (Dunne, 2009), playback theatre (Salas, 1999), sociodrama (Kellerman, 2007), psychodrama (Moreno, 1987), forum theatre (Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 2006), documentary theatre (Forsyth and Megson, 2009), reminiscence theatre (Lilley and Derbyshire, 2013), social theatre (Jennings, 2009), applied theatre (Prendergast and Saxton, 2016), theatre of witness (Sepinuk, 2013), and verbatim theatre (Anderson and Wilkinson, 2007).

2.2. Autobiographical performance in dramatherapy

Theatre and performance have been discussed in the field of dramatherapy as spaces of encounter, that hold possibilities for transformation and healing for the performer and the spectator alike. Although not directly envisaged in the context of autobiographical performance, the first two sections on theatre and healing and therapeutic theatre in dramatherapy will highlight a number of processes that will prove to be relevant to an understanding and analysis of the object of study in this thesis.

The remaining sub-sections of the review of the literature will more specifically focus on the current state of research in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy. The review will be articulated around a number of significant processes that will serve as a baseline for a comparison with the literature on autobiographical performance in theatre and performance studies discussed in the next section of this chapter. These processes will also be envisaged

[2] Criteria of autobiographical performance:
- a performance whose primary material is a moment or aspect of personal lived experience
- a performer who is also the author of the performance,
- a performance in front of an audience

for the way in which they relate to the question of the creation of meaning in autobiographical performance.

A final summary will condense the findings emerging from the literature review in dramatherapy and highlights the gaps in research.

2.2.1. Theatre and healing

Authors in the field of dramatherapy (Grainger, 2014, 2006; Casson, 1997) have discussed how theatre and performance can be described as healing, by particularly focusing on the transformative potential contained in the encounter and relationship between actor and spectator.

Casson (1997) considered how the theatrical experience can be healing for audience members. He suggests how the act of witnessing theatre operates as a mirror that enables the spectators to become aware of disowned parts of themselves, and to bring into 'consciousness things that have been avoided or repressed' (Casson, 1997, p.47). As a result, argues Casson, the experience of witnessing helps structure and shape their individual life experiences, like a map superimposed on a territory to reveal and define its meanderings. Casson's analysis notably focuses on the effects of theatre *on* the witnessing spectator, as opposed to the effects *of* the witnessing spectator on the theatre event itself and on the experience of the performer/actor. It presents actors and audience members in their dichotomy, as two distinct and separate entities whose experiences appear separate, without considering the effects of their mutual engagement on the performance itself and its meaning.

By contrast, Grainger (2014; 2006; 2005b) provides a different perspective on the theatrical experience by focusing on the healing potential of the encounter itself. If, like Casson, Grainger is concerned with the phenomenological experience of theatre in general, he does not focus so much on the 'therapeusis of the audience' (Casson, 1997, p.43), but rather on the therapeusis of the encounter between actor and spectator. Grainger suggests that this encounter 'is not only the subject matter of theatre but also its *modus operandi*' (in italics in the text, Grainger, 2014, p.117). He echoes the words of the philosopher Bruce Wilshire who, in his seminal text, stated: 'this is the encounter which is theatre' (Wilshire, 1982, p.22).

According to Grainger, the encounter between actor and spectator in performance is an expression of an I-Thou relationship, as initially described by Buber (1970). For Buber, the I-Thou reflects a 'world of relation' (Buber, 1970, p.56) whereby both sides of the dyad grow in their individual subjectivity as a result of their encounter based on their mutual recognition of one another as individual subject. As Buber writes, 'I require a You to become; Becoming I, I say You' (ibid., p.62). In other words, there is a fundamental relationship of dependence between I and Thou, as one is incomplete without the engagement with the other.

For Grainger, the I-Thou relationship between actor and spectator describes the 'living event' (Grainger, 2014, p.120) that is theatre. Theatre is defined by its inherent relationality, which is also where its healing power resides. As he wrote in an earlier but foundational text, 'theatre's healing effect is in its relational nature' (Grainger, 1990, p.24). Grainger mainly focuses on the relationship between actor and spectator, but also acknowledges the different layers of relationship that exist in the making of theatre. He particularly refers to the relationship between actor and character, between actors themselves, and between actors and director. By doing this, he indicates how a complex constellation of interactions constructs the theatre event and makes it a unique and unrepeatable experience. Furthermore, Grainger suggests that the potential of theatre for change resides in the space between actors and spectators. As he writes, 'theatre crystallises an experience of betweenness that is creative of personhood' (Grainger, 2005b, p.8). It generates a process of 'reciprocal self-discovery' (Grainger, 2006, p.79) and 'expansion of individual awareness' (Grainger, 2014, p.132) that emerges from the shared experience that defines it.

Grainger does not only provide a description of how the experience of theatre can be life changing, but also pursues an understanding of 'the fundamental healing mechanism of theatre' (Grainger, 2005b, p.8), and how the meeting with otherness that characterises theatre enables 'a meeting of the self with itself' (Grainger, 2014, p.61). For Grainger, this happens through a process of identification that he frames in terms of 'emotional involvement' (Grainger, 2014, p.125). Grainger defines it in the following way:

> 'The deep feeling of personal involvement in which one's entire lifetime of experience becomes allied with that of someone else in moments of emotional homologisation perceived as the fusion of existences' (Grainger, 2005b, p.10).

Grainger suggests that healing in theatre is not just the expression of a relationship but more fundamentally of an emotional connection enabled through that relationship. It is as if that connection created an emotional loop whereby the spectators are not only made to experience the emotions of the performer, but also in return to experience and understand themselves differently as individuals. As Grainger writes, talking about the experience of theatre:

> 'Supported by the ability to participate in other people's feelings which comes from our own identification with them we break through into acceptance of things we have not allowed ourselves to feel about ourselves; things we have kept at a distance' (ibid., p.11).

Grainger describes this process of personal transformation through theatre in terms of catharsis (Duggan and Grainger, 1997). As Grainger (2005b, p.9) suggests, 'the experience of catharsis is the most striking sign of a mutual involvement on the part of separate and distinct personalities'. For Grainger, catharsis represents an awareness and consciousness of what is revealed through the emotional and embodied experience of others in theatre. It is not so much a discharge of emotions as it is 'an actual experience of life (…) producing understanding of the most authentic and valuable kind' (Grainger, 2014, p.134).

Yet, Grainger observes that 'catharsis is revealed as a matter of balance' (Grainger, 2005b, p.10). He explains how this balance is achieved through the distance provided by the aesthetic of the performance (Duggan and Grainger, 1997). For Grainger, the process of catharsis is regulated through the aesthetic distance of the performance to create safe possibilities for awareness and change. This point had previously been made by Scheff (1976) who, in a seminal text on the role played by aesthetic distance on the experience of the audience in theatre, described it as the optimum balance between emotional engagement and a capacity for reflection. The concept was also discussed by Furman (1988) who, in an early but nevertheless significant text for the understanding of the therapeutic experience of audiences in theatre, described it as a balance between the experiencing self and the observing self of the spectator. Like these authors, Grainger (2014, p.140) suggests how 'aesthetic distance creates a bridge between the worlds of imagination and reality' across the space separating but also connecting the performer and the spectator.

It can be noted, to conclude this section, that Grainger defines theatre as a 'shared imaginative experience' (Grainger, 2005b, p.11) and does not directly refer to a theatre based

on lived experiences. Grainger constructs his argument on a distinction between actor and character (Grainger, 2006). The process of identification and catharsis that he describes is in direct relation to the persona of the actor, as element of a 'metaphorical structure' (Duggan and Grainger, 1997, p.7), and not to his/her person. Nevertheless, his analysis is an invitation to reflect on its relation to the field of autobiographical performance, and more specifically to the relational dynamic between performer and spectator.

2.2.2. Therapeutic theatre in dramatherapy

Autobiographical performance in dramatherapy is generally considered as a form of therapeutic theatre (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016). The term therapeutic theatre describes a particular practice of performance oriented dramatherapy (Sajnani, 2010), whereby the devising of a performance for an audience is an integral part of the therapeutic process. These performances are generally produced by marginalised or minor groups in the dominant culture, under the guidance of a dramatherapist. It differs from process oriented dramatherapy that is 'shaped by the ongoing dynamic issues emerging at any particular point in treatment' (Emunah, 1994, p.25), whether in the context of individual or group work.

Hodermarska et al. (2015) observe that the field of therapeutic theatre in dramatherapy is far from homogenous and lacks clarity in terms of definition. The literature shows a diversity of approaches and practices that have changed over time. Mitchell (1992; 1994) developed a model of therapeutic theatre based on the para-theatre of Grotowski, but with no definite element of public performance. In the first edition of *Drama as Therapy*, Jones (1996) identified therapeutic performance as one of the nine core processes in dramatherapy. As for Mitchell, Jones did not consider the showing to an external audience as essential to the process. Around the same time, Emunah (1994) showed how performance oriented work in dramatherapy carries important therapeutic potential. If it reflects, for Emunah (ibid., p.251), a practice based on 'theatrical productions in which real people tell real-life stories', other authors have subsequently described it as a practice that, although being articulated around the creation of a public performance, is not necessarily focused on real life experiences (Snow, D'Amico and Tanguay, 2003; Schrader, 1998; Bailey, 2009). More recently, Sajnani (2010; 2012a) has envisaged the use of performance in dramatherapy as a tool for community dialogue and social change.

The literature on therapeutic theatre in dramatherapy shows that, despite being an umbrella term that covers a range of practices, it is significant as a therapeutic form due to a number of processes that are also relevant to the study of autobiographical performance, and that complement some of the points made earlier with regards to theatre and healing. Two of these are particularly worth reviewing. The first one concerns the internal relational processes at play within the practice of therapeutic theatre. The second one refers to its effects on the experience of the performers and audience members.

With regard to the first point, Emunah describes how the performance itself transforms the idea of therapy. As she writes, 'the setting of the therapy scene changes from closed room to public stage; the cast changes from client and therapist to client/*actor*, therapist/*director*, and outside *audience*' (in italics in the text, Emunah, 1994, p.251). Emunah highlights a reshuffling of roles in therapeutic theatre, but also the different levels of interactions within the therapeutic space that are unique to the form. Bailey also describes similar dynamics when writing that in performance-based work in dramatherapy, 'the clients create the play in rehearsal while the therapist guides its creation, and the audience is brought in to share the performance and serve as witnesses at the end of the process' (Bailey, 2009, p.377). Similarly, Snow, D'Amico and Tanguay (2003) recognise the significance of group dynamics in the creation of therapeutic theatre. In their formative text on the use of theatrical performance with psychiatric patients, Emunah and Johnson describe this as the 'interpersonal structure' of therapeutic theatre (Emunah and Johnson, 1983, p.239). It can be noted that none of these studies go as far as providing a detailed analysis of how these different levels of interaction impact on the devising process, and on the experience of those involved.

With regard to the second point, Emunah and Johnson (1983) discussed the effects of performance on the patients/performers and on the audience, and the interdependent relationship between the experience of both. This double attention given to the experience of the performers and audience members is reflected in most of the literature on therapeutic theatre in dramatherapy. As such, this represents a contrast with the way in which the literature on theatre and healing, as discussed above, mainly addressed the healing mechanism of theatre for the audience. MacKay, who discussed a number of therapeutic theatre projects with different populations, wrote that 'a public theatrical performance of

story material developed through the dramatherapy, is often a transforming experience for the actor-participants and for their audience' (MacKay, 1996, p.161). Like Emunah & Johnson, she shows that the therapeutic experiences of performers and audiences are interlinked in a way that reflects reciprocal processes contributing to mutual transformation. More recently, Bird described this in terms of 'mutual therapeutic theatre where both parties to the drama have an experience which can lead to transformation' (Bird, 2006, p.27).

The literature indicates that the impact of the performance on the experience of the performers is largely associated with being witnessed by the audience, whereas the impact on the audience is associated with the experience of being the witness to the performers. With reference to the experience of the performer, Bailey observes that the witnessing of the audience 'validates their discoveries' (Bailey, 2009, p.377). Snow, D'Amico and Tanguay identify, as a result of interviews carried out post-performance, a 'reduced sense of stigmatization and improvement of self-image' (Snow, D'Amico and Tanguay, 2003, p.81) as one of the therapeutic effects on the performers. Hodermarska et al. (2015) describe the experience of the performers as empowering, in a way that, they observe, is consistent with literature on therapeutic theatre. Yet, Hodermarska et al. also raise the question of how the audience can impede the therapeutic experience of the performer, as opposed to enhancing it. The literature on therapeutic theatre shows a lack of recent data, with the exception of the study by Snow, D'Amico and Tanguay (2003), on the actual experience of the performer and on the role played by the response of the audience on that experience.

With reference to the experience of the audience, Emunah and Johnson (1983) describe how the identification of the audience members with the performers creates a sense of shared humanity. As discussed above, the question of identification with the emotion and experience of the persona of the actor was identified by Grainger (2014) as an essential aspect of the therapeutic effect of theatre on the audience. In the context of therapeutic theatre, McKay describes how the resonance with the material of the performance creates significant possibilities for awareness and change for the audience. As she writes,

> 'the audience is not only receiving the material (…), it is also collectively and individually resonating with responses from its own unconscious (…). We can speak of the catharsis and the 'gift' of tears for an audience, and a resultant shift in awareness' (MacKay, 1996, p.171).

Sajnani (2017; 2012a) also considers the impact of performance on the experience of the audience by particularly locating it within a critical pedagogy framework, aimed at identifying and addressing issues of inequality, oppression and social exclusion. Sajnani is most interested in the dynamics that enable 'a progressive change' (Sajnani, 2010, p.190) in the experience of the audience as witness, as opposed to that experience per se. Like Grainger (2005b), she seeks to understand the mechanisms through which the audience is able to identify and to resonate with the experience staged. Like Grainger, Sajnani particularly considers the modulating role of aesthetics in 'bridging the gap' (Sajnani, 2010, p.194) between the performer and the witnessing audience, and in facilitating a process of transformation. Writing about the aesthetic of a performance, she observes that 'finding the balance is what allows for both emotional and rational engagement, affords new perspectives, engenders dialogue, and carries the potential for change' (Sajnani, 2012a, p.15).

If Sajnani appears primarily motivated by the creation of 'socially effective and affective performances' (Sajnani, 2012a, p.6) in which aesthetic considerations play a key role, she also shows how performance can effectively facilitate the reintegration of previously fragmented human experiencing (Sajnani, 2010). It can be noted that, as it is the case for the experience of the performer, there is a general lack of empirical research data in the therapeutic theatre literature on how the experience of witnessing is transformative for the audience, and on the role of the aesthetics of the performance in that process. In a recent case study of a therapeutic theatre performance, Alker (2015) argues for a re-evaluation of the place of aesthetics in this particular genre, but without elaborating on how it actually impacts on the experience of the audience.

2.2.3. State of research in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy

The field of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy has significantly expanded since the publication of *The Self in Performance*, edited by Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson (2016), in which I contributed a chapter (Jacques, 2016). Up to then, autobiographical performance research in dramatherapy remained quite disparate and scarce.

The field of autobiographical performance research has been significantly shaped by the work of Emunah (1994; 2015; 2016) who introduced the term of self-revelatory performance.

Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez (2014, p.93) define it as ‘a form of drama therapy and theatre in which a performer fashions an original theatrical piece based on current unresolved real-life issues, with an aim toward healing or psychologically grappling with this material’. Emunah is unambiguous that the primary function of self-revelatory performance is the ‘working through of current challenges or struggles in need of healing’ (Emunah, 2015, p.72). For Emunah, it differs from autobiographical theatre in the sense that the issues that it addresses have not been dealt with or resolved. Its potential for healing resides in the creation and revelation of ‘new layers of insight, awareness, meaning and feeling’ for the performer (ibid., p.80).

The literature shows that not all practitioners in the field of the performance of the self (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016) recognise themselves in the terminology suggested by Emunah. Pendzik for instance, refers to the term of ‘autobiographical therapeutic performance’, to describe ‘a particular form of drama therapy, which involves the development of a play or performance based on personal material, to be presented in front of an audience’ (Pendzik, 2013, p.4). Sajnani refers to the ‘performance of personal story’ (Sajnani, 2016, p.93). Zehavi uses the term of ‘drama therapy-based autobiographical performance’ to highlight ‘the use of a drama therapy methodology’ (Zehavi, 2016, p.157), whilst remaining located within the broader field of performance practice.

Despite the variations, these different terminologies embrace a distinction between therapeutic and non-therapeutic forms of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016). The therapeutic form corresponds to a practice that reflects a particular intention, as suggested by Emunah (1994; 2015). It exists alongside other practices that are guided by different motivations in their use of autobiographical performance. The literature shows that autobiographical performance fulfils three different functions, beside the therapeutic one. Firstly, a social function whereby autobiographical performances are instruments for advocacy, emancipatory practice, critical consciousness and social change, and awareness raising on issues faced by marginalised and disadvantaged groups (Sajnani, 2010; 2012a). Secondly, a pedagogical and reflective function whereby autobiographical performances support the learning process, the competencies and the continual development of trainee and qualified dramatherapists (Dokter and Gersie, 2016; Seymour, 2016; Landy et al., 2012). Thirdly, a research function that envisages

autobiographical performance as a particular form and method of inquiry[3] (Sajnani, 2013; Bird, 2016).

It can be noted that autobiographical performance, as a form of practice in dramatherapy, seems to be primarily defined by its functionality, rather than by specific processes characteristic of its internal structure (such as for instance the relationship of the performers to the audience or to the dramatherapist). The question can be raised as to whether these processes and attributes transcend the different forms of autobiographical performance, regardless of their primary function. It is that line of argument that I intend to follow to structure the review of the literature on autobiographical performance in dramatherapy.

In her seminal work, Emunah (1994; 2015; 2016) identified a number of significant dynamics and processes in self-revelatory performance that have remained key research areas in the field of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016):

- the dynamic between the therapeutic and the aesthetic,
- the role of the audience as witness,
- the relational dimension of autobiographical performance.

These three processes are generally considered as contributing to the therapeutic effects of autobiographical performance in terms of structuring experience, producing self-discoveries, insights, acceptance, personal growth and meaning (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016; Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez, 2014; Wood, 2015). In what follows, I review each of these processes with the view of also considering the way in which they relate to meaning making in autobiographical performance.

2.2.4. Dynamic between the therapeutic and the aesthetic

Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez describes self-revelatory performance as ‘a genre of live theatre and a form of drama therapy’ (Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez,

[3] This particular function of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy will be addressed further in the context of the research methodologies of this study. See Methodological Framework chapter - section 3.2.1.3.

2014, p.93). By doing this, they describe it as being simultaneously an art form and a therapeutic method. They emphasise how aesthetic and therapeutic processes in self-revelatory performances are equally important. Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez explain that not only do these two processes exist alongside one another, they also enhance one another through their mutual interplay. As Emunah (1994, p.292) writes, 'the aesthetic and therapeutic strands are intertwined'. Emunah particularly emphasises how the aesthetic of the performance intensifies the therapeutic process. This is as much in relation to the experience of the performer as to the experience of the audience. As Sajnani (2016, p.85) writes, 'performing one's life on stage in drama therapy involves giving aesthetic expression to lived experience in the service of healing for both actors and audiences'. Let us examine how the literature understands the interplay between the aesthetic and the therapeutic for the performer and the audience in autobiographical performance.

With regard to the performer, the aesthetic expression of lived experience that Sajnani described, can result in significant insights and new meanings. As Pendzik (2013, p.13) writes, 'the translation of painful experiences into stage language is not performed only as a means to express their pain, but also in order to allow it to evolve, to transform into something else'. The aesthetic, that corresponds to the expressive and dramatic forms available to the performer, is similar to the soil of the performance in which the seeds of change and transformation can grow. Dokter and Gersie's research (2016) into the memories of practicing dramatherapists about their autobiographical performance devised in their training, shows that these dramatic forms were not only a vehicle for the communication of sensitive issues, but also a prism that revealed unanticipated understandings and discoveries of profound affective meaning. Zehavi suggests how these correspond to 'performative moments' (Zehavi, 2016, p.164), that emerge from the artistry of the performance and can produce life-changing effects. Pendzik (2016, p.59) uses the term 'revelation' to describe similar processes. She observes how the aesthetic re-shaping of experience becomes in itself autobiographical, in the sense that, as she explains, 'it constitutes an actual experience that will be inscribed in our body/mind/soul' (ibid., p.63). Like Zehavi and Pendzik, Johnson describes moments of 'surprise' in autobiographical performance (Johnson, 2016, p.78) that are rooted in its artistic elements.

With regard to the audience, Emunah suggests that the absence of separation between actor and character in autobiographical performance intensifies the theatrical experience for the

spectator, and 'augments the audience's identification' (Emunah, 2015, p.79). This is significantly different from the way in which Grainger (2006), in his discussion on theatre and healing, only considered the identification of the audience with the character played by the actor. Furthermore, Emunah (2015) argues that the connection between the performer and the audience, and therefore the capacity of the latter for identification and transformation, is a function of the aesthetic distance achieved through the performance. As Wood suggests, aesthetic distance represents an 'optimal balance between affective/emotional engagement and critical personal reflection' (Wood, 2015, p.1) that fosters transformation in the spectator. This confirms what Sajnani (2010) suggested in the context of therapeutic theatre, namely that aesthetics bridges the gap between the experiences of the performer and the audience, and creates an affective link between the two. This also echoes what Grainger (2014; 2005b) suggested with regards to how aesthetic distance in theatre regulates the capacity of the audience to safely identify with the staged action, and to access new knowledge and meaning.

Sajnani extends her discussion of aesthetics in therapeutic theatre to the field of autobiographical performance, arguing that aesthetics is the means through which the 'relational purpose' (Sajnani, 2016, p.87) of autobiographical performance is realised, but also the culmination of relational processes between those involved in the different stages leading to the performance. Sajnani refers to the concept of 'relational aesthetics' developed by Bourriaud[4] (2002) to construct her argument, and to reveal the double quality of aesthetics in autobiographical performance. As Sajnani (2016, p.93) writes, 'relational aesthetics privilege the relationships that give rise to and result from the aesthetic performance of personal story'. The subsection 2.2.6. below will review the way in which the literature has addressed the particular relational dimension of autobiographical performance from which, according to Sajnani, a particular form of aesthetic representation emerges. With regard to the way in which aesthetics facilitates the relationship to others as spectators, Sajnani suggests that it supports the creation of a shared world in which the experiences of the spectators can 'resonate' (ibid., p.87) with those of the performer. Pendzik is also curious about the ways in which autobiographical performance 'resonates in the spectators' (Pendzik, 2016, p.56) and connects with their own stories. Unlike Sajnani, Pendzik does not directly elaborate on the mechanisms of resonance and how it links to the aesthetics of the performance. In a different research study that adopted a heuristic methodological framework, Bird explains how he

[4] I will refer back to the relational aesthetics of Bourriaud (2002) in section 2.3.3.1. of this chapter

wanted to explore whether his autobiographical experience 'had universal resonance for the audience' (Bird, 2016, p.176). Despite describing how the audience connected with his experience on stage, Bird does not provide a detailed analysis of how the aesthetic choices within his performance might have facilitated that connection and resonance.

A very recent research study by Wood (2018) supports the argument put forward by Sajnani with regards to the role of aesthetics in autobiographical performance, and addresses some of the shortcomings of Pendzik's and Bird's studies regarding the mechanism of resonance. Wood's research investigates how the witnessing of a performance based on a particular family experience can 'initiate a process of transformation and help families with the challenges they are facing' (Wood, 2018, p.24). The findings of the research, that followed a grounded theory methodology, show that the resonance of the performance with the witnessing audience results from the use of aesthetic modes of representation that create opportunities for both affective and reflective responses. This produces particular effects on audience members that Wood discusses in terms of 'impact' (ibid., p.31). Amongst those, her findings suggest how the witnessing audience finds permission to talk about certain experiences and to reduce 'the isolation and shame associated with that experience' (ibid., p.28). The research shows how the connection with the performance is regulated through aesthetic distance, as suggested by Sajnani, and how it leads to deeper understanding and meaning for those witnessing it. This research confirms the observations made by Le Clanché du Rand who, in an earlier but still significant paper for providing a rare insight into an autobiographical performance devised by a dramatherapist, explained how her choice of aesthetic structures made 'the audience care' (Le Clanché du Rand, 1992, p.215), and ultimately 'be moved and brought to new perceptions' (ibid., p.209).

2.2.5. The role of the audience as witness

The role and function of the witnessing audience in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy has received quite a significant amount of attention in the literature (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016). It largely refers to the effects of the witnessing audience on the experience of the performer and on the production of the performance event.

Rubin (2007; 2016), amongst others, discusses the vital role of the audience in self-revelatory performance. Rubin (2016, p.129) observes that 'the role of the audience as witness can repair a vital link, bringing the person back into community from isolation'. According to Rubin, the audience fulfils a particular function of validation, recognition and acceptance of the experiences, struggles and achievements of the performer. Volkas calls this particular function of the audience the 'reparative witness' (Volkas, 2016, p.125). According to Volkas, it corresponds to an authentication function that affirms an experience that might have been particularly difficult to reveal and share. Emunah refers to a similar function of 'empathic witness' (Emunah, 2015, p.80) to describe, like Volkas, how the witnessing of the audience is an important factor in the healing process of the performer. As she writes, 'the role of the audience is to watch what is about to take place with an open heart' (Emunah, 2016, p.47). Yet, Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez also describe the healing function of the audience as secondary to the primary 'therapeutic aspects that arise within the performer through engaging with the authenticity of the piece itself' (Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez, 2014, p.99). The particular witnessing role of the audience as supportive of the performer's therapeutic change was also highlighted in the literature on therapeutic theatre (Bailey, 2009). It raises a number of questions that are worth discussing for their relevance to the object of study in this thesis. Four critical observations can be made.

Firstly, as suggested by Sajnani, the audience is viewed as a 'homogeneous entity, uniform in its desire to affirm or challenge, irrespective of the diversity of witnesses gathered' (Sajnani, 2010, p.191). The audience is described as a collective group whose internal dynamic, sub-groupings and individualities that shape it, tend to be overlooked.

Secondly, that description of the role of the witnessing audience fails to acknowledge the different 'layers of witnessing' (Jones, 2007, p.112) within the space of autobiographical performance. It doesn't necessarily recognise the different types of audiences that exist within that space. As Jones (1996, p.110) writes, 'the audience phenomenon is present in a series of possible interactions between group members, and between group members and facilitator'. Only a few authors in the field of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy have considered the different levels of witnessing audiences described by Jones (Sajnani, 2016; Dokter and Gersie, 2016). This particular point will be addressed more comprehensively in the following subsection on the relational dimension of autobiographical performance.

Thirdly, the audience referred to in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, is a very specific type of audience mainly made up of invited friends and families (Rubin, 2007). It remains unclear as to whether the effects of the witnessing role assigned to that selected audience is generalizable to a more diverse type of audience. Equally, if the selection of a particular audience is mainly justified for therapeutic and safety reasons in the interest of the performer's individual process, it cannot be assumed that the audience response will always be benevolent and sympathetic. The expectation on the audience to respond in a supportive and consensual manner may overlook covert responses that may convey feelings of discomfort, dissonance or vulnerability, and that in turn may have an impact on how the witnessing is experienced. The question raised by Emunah (1994, p.99), 'what if the audience does not really understand or empathize?', remains largely unanswered. The existing literature shows that there is a general lack of research data and analysis about how the actual experience of audience members informs the experience of the performer, like there is a general shortfall of data on how the lived experience of the performer informs the lived experience of the audience, as discussed above in the context of the dynamic between aesthetic and therapeutic processes in autobiographical performance.

Fourthly, Emunah (2015) appears to cast the audience in a specific role in order to fulfil a specific function for the performer. This view implicitly suggests that the witnessing audience is an object for change, rather than an agent of change. It objectifies the audience in the sense that it emphasises its necessity without necessarily recognising its autonomy. It is based on a preconception of the function of the audience that does not consider ways in which it can be described as subjectively active outside of the role assigned to it. The current discussion in the literature therefore fails to provide a detailed understanding of the role of the audience as 'active witness' (Jones, 1993, p.46) in the production of the performance event and its meaning.

In his seminal research on the core process of witnessing in dramatherapy, Jones (1993) does not primarily envisage the witnessing audience in terms of its functionality, like Emunah (2015), but rather in terms of meaning. For Jones, the audience directly participates in the creation of meaning by virtue of its position of difference as active interpreter. Jones shows that the individual audience member as witness is a subject in their own right endowed with their own centre of consciousness. If Jones does not directly discuss witnessing in the context

of autobiographical performance, his analysis remains relevant to understand the position of the audience as co-author in the process of meaning making in performance. Sajnani also observes, like Jones, how audience members are 'individuals who move, interact, and have ideas and impulses of their own that arise in the present moment' (Sajnani, 2016, p.90). According to this viewpoint, the audience seems to do more than merely validating or authorising an experience. It suggests how audience members as witnesses actively create and author the performance alongside the performer through the associations generated by it. This situation appears to be an expression of the I-Thou relationship described by Grainger (2014) whereby the performer and the audience members are engaged in a process of 'reciprocal self-discovery' (Grainger, 2006, p.79). In that sense, the meaning of the performance can be described as being the result of an exchange or transaction between the staged experience of the performer and the lived experience of the witnessing audience. As Alker describes it, in an article providing an account of a particular lived experience depicted through autobiographical performance, 'experiences intertwine and move back and forth between the audience and the stage' (Alker, 2015, p.195).

In a qualitative research on the experience of autobiographical performance by dramatherapy students, Seymour (2016) discusses the active role of the spectator in the production of autobiographical performance in a way that largely echoes the observations made by Jones on the active witness. Seymour bases much of her reflection on the work of Rancière (2011) and on the concept of the emancipated spectator[5] to describe how the meaning of the performance lies 'between the knowledge, experiences and vocabularies of the performer and audience' (Seymour, 2016, p.209). It can be noted that this claim does not seem to have been substantiated by other empirical researches in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy.

2.2.6. The relational dimension of autobiographical performance

The literature shows that autobiographical performance can be described as being essentially relational (Sajnani, 2016) for two main reasons. Firstly, because the personal stories performed on stage reflect the performer's relational history with others throughout life, whether these are family or any other members of their social world (Pendzik, 2016).

[5] I will come back to the work of Rancière in the review of the literature in theatre and performance studies in subsection 2.3.3. below

Secondly, because the devising of the performances involves a number of significant others who have, through their presence and engagement, some bearing on the experience of the performer, the way in which the performances develop in form and content, and the outcomes of the process (Sajnani, 2016). These 'relational aspects' (Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez, 2014, p.93) of autobiographical performance remain insufficiently investigated and represent fertile grounds for research. As Sajnani (2012a, p.16) writes, 'what remains to be explored is the larger systems of relationships that influence these presentations of self and the struggles they represent'.

An analysis of the literature suggests that the relational dimension of autobiographical performance can be described as being contained within horizontal and vertical axes. The horizontal level reflects the different types of interactions between a number of different people engaged in the process of devising autobiographical performances (Sajnani, 2016), whereas the vertical level reflects the different stages of this process (Zehavi, 2016; Johnson, 2016).

With regard to the vertical level, Sajnani observes that 'the process leading to the stage is integral to the performance of personal story in drama therapy' (Sajnani: 2016, p.88). This process is generally divided into three stages that are characterised by different dynamic configurations of interaction: the preparatory phase, the rehearsal phase and the performance phase (Johnson, 2016; Zehavi, 2016; Dokter and Gersie, 2016).

With regard to the horizontal level, Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez (2014, p.103) describe the 'relational nexus' of self-revelatory performance in the context of the training of dramatherapy students. They suggest how this nexus reflects different sets of interaction between the student/performer, the dramatherapist/director, the fellow students in the group, and the selected audience. Similarly, Dokter and Gersie describe autobiographical performances as 'theatres of self-in-relation' (Dokter and Gersie, 2016, p.183). They observe that the performances, although being at times the culmination of a solo process, are nevertheless created in the context of a group that reflects a 'reciprocal collaboration' (ibid., p.191). Pendzik also describes the effects of group work in autobiographical performance. She compares the group process to 'midwifery' whereby the participants, through their involvement and emotional investment, help 'bring forth and deliver a final product' (Pendzik, 2013, p.6). Johnson identifies different levels of 'otherness' (Johnson, 2016, p.73)

in autobiographical performance that are essential to the process of self-discovery. Amongst those, suggests Johnson, are the person of the director and the presence of the audience which impact in particular ways on the experience of the performer. Like the previous authors, Sajnani also relays a relational view of autobiographical performance, describing it as a 'co-constructed dynamic system' (Sajnani, 2016, p.89) shaped by 'the interplay between all of those involved' (ibid., p.87). Sajnani observes that the focus on the performer 'obscures the interdependence of the artist, audience, and other authorizing agents' (ibid., p.88). By doing so, Sajnani questions the notion of agency in autobiographical performance by locating the performer in a matrix of exchanges and interactions. Sajnani offers an analysis that relativizes the autonomous capacity of the performer and acknowledges 'the interdependence and the influence of the relationships that give rise to the self in performance' (ibid., p.92). These relational processes at play indicate the significance of interpersonal dynamics in the creation and devising of autobiographical performance, but also their impact on the meaning attached to the performance.

Among the varied and complex constellation of interactions within the relational nexus of autobiographical performance, as outlined by Emunah (2014), the relationship between the performer and the audience has, as we have already seen, been discussed at length in the literature. By contrast, less attention has been given to an understanding of the effect of the relationships between participants in a group working on the creation of autobiographical performances. In their study of what dramatherapy graduates remember about their autobiographical performances during their training, Dokter and Gersie (2016) clearly show the significant impact of the interactions with peers on the individual process of the research participants. Dokter and Gersie (2016, p.192) observe that 'this finding suggests that the participative, joint effort and solidarity characteristics of the entire autobiographical performance process deserve to be closely examined'. With respect to the relationship between the performer and the dramatherapist/director, the literature shows that it varies in intensity depending on how the therapist sees their role, and how they negotiate the boundary between the two positions (Emunah, 2016; Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016). The double role of the facilitator as dramatherapist and director is certainly one of the most singular features of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy that significantly differs from the customary role of the therapist in traditional therapeutic practice. Both roles are guided by two different sets of motivation. If the therapist is primarily concerned by providing a containing and healing experience for the client/performer, the director is also concerned by

the artistic effectiveness of the performance (Emunah, 2015). Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson observe that the variety in practice reflects a difference between dramatherapists/directors who prefer to adopt a 'consulting or witnessing role' (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016, p.14), and those who actively intervene in 'the co-creative process' (ibid.). Regardless of the orientation of the dramatherapist/director, there is a general agreement that their overall stance is instrumental to the process (Emunah, 2016; Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez, 2014; Pendzik, 2013). Zehavi shows how the 'director-performer alliance' (Zehavi, 2016, p.162) significantly contributes to the emergence of 'performative moments' (ibid., p.164). In addition, Sajnani also observes that 'the intertwining of psychological and aesthetic aims' (Sajnani, 2016, p.93) that informs the intervention of the dramatherapist/director, raises important ethical questions about the level of influence exerted on the client/performer. Pendzik stresses the issue of power differential between the dramatherapist and the performer by underlining that, 'for all of this intense collaboration and emotional engagement, the drama therapist is never an equal co-creator of the piece' (Pendzik, 2013, p.7). The question of ethics in autobiographical performance will be discussed further in the methodology chapter when outlining the ethical framework of the research[6].

2.2.7. Summary

The review of the literature in dramatherapy has highlighted significant processes and mechanisms in the experience of the theatrical event to understand the transformative and healing effects of that experience on performers and spectators. The literature on theatre and healing and therapeutic theatre in dramatherapy, has particularly shown the mechanisms through which an emotional connection is established between the stage and the lived experience of the spectators. It has indicated the significance of aesthetic distance in regulating a process of identification that has been associated with catharsis for the way in which it opens new horizons of meaning for the spectator. Yet, it has also revealed a lack of empirical studies to substantiate these claims.

[6] See chapter 3 section 3.3.3.

The review of the literature on autobiographical performance in dramatherapy has identified three key processes and dynamics that are significant areas of research in that field of theory and practice. These refer to the aesthetics of the performance, the particular role played by audience members as witnesses, and the relational context in which the performance is produced. The literature has shown how these processes and dynamics impact on the experiences of the performer and the spectator, as well as on the production of the performance event. The review of the literature has confirmed the significance of aesthetic distance in the capacity of the performer and spectator to create meaning. It has also revealed the authoring role of the spectators in their relationship to the performer, and the complex constellation of interdependent relationships between a number of significant others involved in the creation of autobiographical performance. The literature indicates that, although these processes highlight a number of relational dynamics at play within the space of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, there is a lack of empirical and qualitative studies that provide a detailed description and analysis of how these dynamics impact on the experience of the performer and the spectator, and how they contribute to the production of meaning.

2.3. Autobiographical performance in theatre and performance studies

The following section critically reviews how autobiographical performance has been discussed in the fields of theatre and performance studies. The review starts with an overview of how identity and agency have been approached in autobiographical writing and autobiographical performance. It subsequently discusses the origins and functions of autobiographical performance in theatre and performance studies. As was the case in the discussion of the dramatherapy literature, the review particularly focuses on a number of processes that are compared and contrasted with those identified in the review of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy.

The remaining subsections examine recent developments on the role and experience of the audience in performance and theatre from a theoretical and empirical perspective. These trends in current research are reviewed for the way in which they relate to the object of analysis in this thesis, and inform an understanding of the dynamic relationship between

performer and audience in autobiographical performance, and its impact on the production of meaning.

A final summary will conclude the findings emerging from the review of the literature on autobiographical performance in theatre and performance studies, and in dramatherapy.

2.3.1. Autobiographies, personal narratives and identity

Personal narratives have gained much prominence in the last thirty years as a result of an increased interest in the centrality of narratives as inescapable modes of formulation and organisation of human experience (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1986; Bruner, 1990; Ricoeur, 1986). Personal narratives, in written and oral forms, are commonly seen as playing a significant role in the structuring of individual experience, and therefore as an important factor in the construction of personal identity (McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich, 2006; Hammack, 2008). This has resulted in the emergence of the concept of narrative identity (McAdams and McLean, 2013) to describe how narratives are vehicles for the creation of a sense of internal clarity, meaning and purpose. It is characterized by its causal coherence in bringing together fragments of autobiographical memory to structure life experience. As Singer suggested, in a review of the existing research on narrative identity, 'we come to know ourselves and to know about the world through the stories that we tell, and through the meanings that we construct from these self-defining narratives' (Singer, 2004, p.454).

Yet, this viewpoint on personal narratives has also raised important questions about how much the teller is actually the agent of the narrated life story, and about the limits of a first-person perspective that is characteristic of it. Bruner, particularly, points in the direction of the 'cultural, interpersonal and linguistic influences' (Bruner, 2004, p.694) that guide the telling of personal stories. This illustrates how life stories are to be contextualized in cultural and linguistic structures that inhabit the narrative subject and define the domain of possibilities. The concepts of subjectivity and identity have therefore been profoundly revisited in the light of post-structuralist and constructionist theories (Belsey, 2002; Hjelm, 2014) that propound the idea of a historically and socially situated subject within pre-established linguistic structures. The autobiographical subject is no longer presented as an autonomous and unified entity, but rather as a postmodern contingent construct defined by its

temporal and spatial location (Smith and Watson, 2010). Besides, these theories have been supplemented by theories of performativity that have particularly envisaged how identity is performed in the context of social practices, norms and conventions that construe it. This has been most notably suggested in the seminal work of Butler (1988), for whom performativity translates how social categories, such as gender, are primarily constituted through the enacted and embodied repetition of cultural conventions and symbolic structures, that create the illusion of an essentialist ontology. According to Butler, the project of identity formation largely evades the individual subject. As she writes, 'I am authored by what precedes and exceeds me' (Butler, 2005, p.82).

In the particular field of narrative psychology, McAdams and his collaborators underline the 'poorly understood interplay between individual agency and social context' (McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich, 2006, p.6) in the production of personal narratives. By contrast, the literature on autobiographical writing has given more attention to the contextual influences on the construction of narratives. Smith and Watson (2010) identify no less than eleven factors that contribute to the shaping of the personal story, and that show how the notion of identity produced through acts of narration is essentially a construct. If the literature on autobiographical writing radically questions 'the individual as sole producer of the life-history' (Marcus, 1994, p.4), it also profoundly questions the ontology of autobiographical storytelling as expression of a 'unified, coherent, autonomous self' (Smith, 1998a, p.110). Smith, like Ostman (2013) and Smith and Watson (2010), suggests that autobiographical identity is performative. It reflects the way in which the self does not precede its writing but is rather an effect of it. As Smith (1998a, p.109) writes, those effects are 'produced through the action of public discourses, among them the culturally pervasive discourses of identity and truthtelling that inform historically specific modes, contexts, and receptions of autobiographical narrating'. Langellier expresses similar ideas when writing that, 'performativity articulates and situates personal narrative within the forces of discourse, the institutionalised networks of power relations, which constitute subject positions and order context' (Langellier, 1999, p.129). According to Smith, autobiographical narratives can be conceptualised as fields of tension whereby dynamics of objectification of identity through social discourse, are being played out alongside a redefinition and reclaiming of personal identity through the act of narration. As Smith (1998b, p.434) writes, 'autobiographical practices become occasions for restaging subjectivity, and autobiographical strategies

become occasions for the staging of resistance'. Narratives appear therefore to be contested sites where meanings collide, are being resisted, renegotiated and reclaimed.

2.3.2. Functions and processes in autobiographical performance

These debates within the field of autobiographical writing find a deep resonance with the way in which identity and meaning have been approached and discussed in the field of autobiographical performance. This is largely due to the fact that both artistic practices are firmly embedded in feminist theory that challenges dominant discourses and politics of representation from an epistemic and artistic position (Heddon, 2008; Carver, 1998). A significant number of publications reflect how autobiographical performance as a theatre genre cannot be dissociated from the feminist paradigm in which it emerged (Claycomb, 2012; Heddon, 2008; Grace and Wasserman, 2006; Miller, Taylor and Carver, 2003; Smith and Watson, 2002; Donnell and Polkey, 2000; Gale and Gardner, 2004; Schneider, 1997; Swindells, 1995). The literature on autobiographical performance shows how it came out of a larger social movement and social critique, exposing the structural and ideological constraints imposed by certain social groups on others, and therefore limiting the domains of experience. It emerged as a reaction and response, from the margins, to the reification of issues such as gender, sexuality, body and race within dominant and hegemonic social and discursive practices (Claycomb, 2012). It was motivated by a desire to make visible the experience of marginalised, voiceless and oppressed groups, and to provide a platform for the disruption of dominant narratives and the formulation of alternative discourses and meanings. As Langellier (1999, p.126) suggests, performed personal narratives respond to the social conditions of 'voiceless bodies who desire to resist the colonising powers of discourse'. Carver (1998, p.394) makes a similar observation when writing that, 'women's performance art and autobiographical performance subvert objectification by reclaiming women's own perspectives, bodies, and voices'. Autobiographical performance is therefore firmly located at the interface between the personal and the political (Heddon, 2008).

The genesis of autobiographical performance indicates that it fulfils an important socio-political function towards consciousness raising in 'the struggle for emancipation, equal rights and recognition' (Heddon, 2008, p.20). Miller and Taylor (2006), like Park-Fuller (2000), equate it to a testimonial function. Park-Fuller (ibid., p.22) defines it as a

'transgressive political act'. But not all autobiographical practices in performance can be reduced to that function. Heddon shows that autobiographical performance can also fulfil a healing function and be 'understood as an act of recovery' (Heddon, 2008, p.54). In addition, it has also been envisaged as a particular research method as will be discussed in the next chapter[7].

These three different functions of autobiographical performance are similar to those identified in the dramatherapy literature, although emerging from different historical contexts. The literature in theatre and performance studies also highlights a number of processes that appear to be common to all types of autobiographical performances regardless of their functionality. As was the case for the review of the literature on autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, I suggest focusing on these processes, as they provide a baseline for comparison across the two disciplines. Three main processes can be identified:

- embodied processes,
- aesthetic processes,
- relational processes.

I review below the main features of these processes by referring to the work and practice of four artists and one ensemble in the field of autobiographical performance[8]: Tim Miller, Robbie McAuley, Tami Spry, Lisa Kron, and the theatre company mct. These particular artists have been selected for the way in which their performance work illustrates the three different processes, and the different functions of the genre. I am aware that artistic practice in autobiographical performance is varied and diverse (Heddon, 2008; Miller, Taylor and Carver, 2003). The constraint of space does not allow for a comprehensive comparative review of the different performance practices in autobiographical performance. In order to address the object of this thesis, it seems more fruitful to examine the underlying processes at play in the genre.

[7] see chapter 3: Methodological framework - subsection 3.2.1.3.
[8] I choose to focus on examples from performance practice because of the large amount of documented evidence from practice in the literature in theatre and performance studies, and the relatively small amount of empirical research compared to the literature in dramatherapy

2.3.2.1. Embodied processes

The literature shows the central role of the body of the performer in autobiographical performance (Claycomb, 2012; Schneider, 1997; Grace and Wasserman, 2006; Miller, Taylor and Carver, 2003). This is largely an expression of the historical convergence between autobiographical performance, feminist theory and feminist performance art (Heddon, 2008). The literature particularly shows how the performing body is the repository of two distinctive processes that simultaneously reflect the body as object and subject. On the one hand, as Smith and Watson (2010, p.38) write, the body is imprinted with 'a set of cultural attitudes and discourses encoding the public meanings of bodies that underwrite relationships of power'. This is what Claycomb (2012, p.30) describes as 'the body-as-text', in the sense of carrying social and discursive meanings. On the other hand, the body also appears to be a site of re-appropriation of meaning through performance (Schneider, 1997). By staging its own performativity, the performing body reveals how identities are engendered through social practices. It is the expression of a performing subject not only storied through discourses, but also storying its own location in history and society (Heddon, 2008). Autobiographical performances are therefore seen by a number of authors, as a means of 'performing performativity' (Grace, 2006, p.70), and of 'subverting objectification' (Carver, 1998, p.394) in order to assert the identity of the performer (Claycomb, 2012).

Compared to the literature in theatre and performance studies, the significance of embodied processes in autobiographical performance is strangely undermentioned in the dramatherapy literature (Pendzik, Emunah and Johnson, 2016). This is particularly the case when envisaging the body as a vehicle for the communication of experience, and as an instrument of human inquiry in the context of autobiographical performance (Jacques, 2016). Although a number of performances have been developed about the body (Le Clanché Du Rand, 1992), they don't necessarily result in a critical discussion on the significance of the performing body.

By contrast, examples of practice in the performing arts show how the body mediates experience alongside discursive practices. In her performance *Skins: A Daughter's (Re)construction of Cancer* (1994)[9], Tami Spry (2000, p.86) expresses how her body is a

[9] as documented in Spry, T., 1997. Skins: A Daughter's (Re)construction of Cancer: A Performative Autobiography. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 17(4), pp.361-365.

receptacle of 'cultural narratives played upon it', but also how performance creates the means to reframe and reshape her own embodied identity. As she writes:

> 'In the process of performing autobiography, the performer concentrates on the body as a site from which the story is generated. She seeks to read what she and others have written on the pulpish hides of her skins. The autobiographical performance process turns the internally somatic into the externally semantic' (Spry, 1997, pp.361-362).

Spry describes how her body contains the knowledge of her experience, and how the process of performance consists in translating what is inscribed in her body into a formulated language. This results in the creation of, what she calls, 'an authorially embodied text' (ibid., 362) that is an expression of a regained agency.

Sally's Rape by the American performance artist Robbie McAuley (1990) provides another example of the relationship between the personal body and the body politic, and how the performing body holds the legacy of history. It illustrates how, as Carver (1998, p.396) writes, the body is used 'as stage for performing powerful social commentary'. *Sally's Rape* recounts the story of McAuley's great-great-grandmother who was raped as a slave, but also her story as a black woman whose body is in itself a testimony of the past. As Young (2010, p.138) observes, 'Robbie McAuley's body is her ancestral body. It represents, and indeed re-presents, the bodies and the embodied experience of her ancestors whose previous actions evoked her current presence'. McAuley makes use of her own body to show us the past, but also to represent an embodiment of the past. Through her body, she enacts 'an embodied acknowledgement of history' (Schneider, 1997, p.174). Unlike Spry, McAuley does not seek to restore a sense of embodied agency. As Heddon (2008, p.77) suggests, her work is rather 'the catalyst for creating the groundwork for dialogue'.

2.3.2.2. Aesthetic processes

Park-Fuller (2000, p.23) describes how autobiographical performances 'render the absent present' by making visible the experiences of people and groups that are located in the shadow of dominant discourses. Park-Fuller also observes that these performances are forms of artistic expression whereby aesthetics plays an entire and important part. As she writes,

'they propose not only an opportunity to speak (and to witness) one's truth, but also to create valid artistic and aesthetic experiences' (ibid., p.23). The example of Tami Spry's performance mentioned above, illustrates the use of the body as a powerful aesthetic means to reveal socio-political power dynamics on the body, but also to reclaim one's own identity. The aesthetics of the performance is therefore integral to the creative and narrative process. As Park-Fuller suggests, it constructs the meaning of the performance as much as it reveals it. Moreover, it is also intended to produce effects on the audience to serve a specific purpose, which, as Madison (1998, p.280) suggests, is to 'create or contribute to a discursive space where unjust systems and processes are identified and interrogated'. Yet, it is also true that aesthetics is not widely discussed in the performance and theatre literature in the context of autobiographical performance. There is no entry under the word 'aesthetics' in the indexes of the publications that I consulted on the subject (Claycomb, 2012; Heddon, 2008; Miller, Taylor and Carver, 2003; Smith and Watson, 2002; Donnell and Polkey, 2000; Gale and Gardner, 2004; Swindells, 1995). This doesn't mean that aesthetic preoccupations are absent from the genre, but that they rather fulfil an auxiliary function.

There appears to be a clear contrast between how aesthetic processes are approached in the literature in dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies. Although significant in the production of autobiographical performance in both fields, they seem to fulfil different purposes. The most tangible distinction resides in the way in which aesthetic processes are associated with the production of affects in dramatherapy, whereas they are associated with the production of effects in performance studies. As discussed in the review of the dramatherapy literature, the aesthetics of the performance heightens the therapeutic process for the performer (Emunah, 1994), but also enables the creation of affective connections with the audience. The literature in performance studies shows how aesthetics primarily supports an agenda for 'social change through the empowerment of self and others' (Park-Fuller, 2000, p.34).

A couple of examples from autobiographical performance artists illustrate how aesthetic strategies transcend the individual to address more directly underlying social, political and cultural issues. Tim Miller's *Glory Box* (2001) illustrates how autobiographical performance can be 'an act of *intervention* that has the capacity to influence the future' (in italics in the text, Park-Fuller, 2000, p.29). For that purpose, he resorts to an aesthetics that places the spectators in a hypothetical scenario, in order to encourage them to act to address the

inequality experienced by bi-national couples of the same sex in the USA. As Heddon (2003, p.243) describes it, Miller performs 'an autobiography that he has not yet lived'. He dissolves the boundary between the autobiographical and the fictional to speak to the consciousness of the spectator about the social discrimination between sexualities. In Miller's performance, aesthetic and autobiographical processes, suggests Heddon (ibid., p.254), 'do not just present the life that is lived, but also affect the life yet to be lived'.

In *2.5 Minute Ride*, the American solo performer Lisa Kron tells the story of her relationship with her father, a German Jewish Holocaust survivor (Kron, 2013). As part of this performance, Kron projects an empty slide show where photographs of the past are nonexistent. Through this projection of absence and untraceable visual memories, Kron invites the audience to project 'their own relationships and experiences' (Kron, 2001, p.3). The effect created through aesthetic choices aims at prompting the audience to interrogate and reflect on their own past.

2.3.2.3. Relational processes

Heddon (2002; 2008; 2013) vehemently contests the views that criticise autobiographical performance for being solipsistic and narcissistic. She argues that it is essentially a dialogic art form, because of 'the public context of the work and the performers' aspirations to communicate with their spectators' (Heddon, 2008, p.5). By situating autobiographical performance practice within a web of relationships and interactions, Heddon presents it as essentially relational. Heddon (2013) particularly insists on the shared space of experience between the performer and the spectators, and on the immediacy of their encounter in live performance. Park-Fuller (2000, p.31) describes this as the 'direct and unmediated character' of autobiographical performance. Although Heddon (2002) observes that the performance of lived experience remains a representation of that experience that brings into question the actual reality of the performed experience, she also suggests that some fundamental relational processes foreground the art form and its meaning. Because of its particular relevance to the object of this study, I will examine in more detail below[10] how the relationship between performer and audience has been discussed in the literature.

[10] See sub-section 2.3.5.

Grace (2006) describes two additional relational processes in autobiographical performance, beside the relationship between performer and spectator. Firstly, Grace argues that autobiographical performance reflects the relational history of the performer with others. Grace suggests the concept of the 'performed relational self' (ibid., p.73) to describe how the performance is the expression of a relationally constituted self throughout its own history. Robbie McAuley in *Sally's Rape* provides an example of how her individual story keeps being shaped by the experience of her ancestors, and by the intergenerational history of her family in the context of race relations in the USA. Secondly, Grace also considers the immediate context of performance, and the effects of the relational dynamics between those present and involved on the production of autobiographies. Grace identifies 'several degrees of relationality' (ibid., p.72) within the autobiographical performance space. She adapts the idea of the autobiographical pact (Lejeune, 1989) to include 'five co-signatories' (Grace, 2006, p.69) that all contribute to and influence the particular 'process of mounting and watching the performance' (ibid., p.76): the author of the performance, the artist performer, the character performed, the audience and the director. Grace proposes a typology of the autobiographical performance event based on the different constellations of relationships between these constitutive elements of the performance. Other authors have also considered how the making of autobiographical performances is more complex than simply limited to a relationship between 'a teller and a told' (Govan et al., 2007, p.57). Langellier (1999, p.131) introduces a difference between the 'narrated event', as the story told, and the 'narrative event', as the web of social relations in which it is located. Similarly, Park-Fuller describes performance as a situated practice that is the expression of 'the microcosm of the performed narrative event' (Park-Fuller, 2000, p.39).

Autobiographical performances that are not performed by solo artists, but rather involve other actors/performers, provide opportunities to envisage how the interactions between these performers might be significant in the production of the performance and its meaning. *Fingerlicks* by the company mct for instance, as documented by Heddon (2004), was the result of a collaborative process between eight women who worked together on a weekly basis for six months. Heddon describes how the performance was based on 'shared participation' (Heddon, 2004, p.234), but does not provide details of the effects of the relational dynamics between those involved on the final performance. Other examples, also discussed by Heddon (2008), such as Lisa Kron's *Well* (2004), do not directly refer to or analyse the effects of relational dynamics on the production of the performances.

As previously discussed, the literature in dramatherapy also focuses quite significantly on the relationship between performer and audience in autobiographical performance. In contrast to the literature in theatre and performance studies, authors in the field of dramatherapy primarily envisage the witness as an important factor in the healing process of the performer (Emunah, 2015; Volkas, 2016). The distinction between the two fields of practice is not surprising provided that the primary focus of the genre is quite different for each. Both have also recognised the significance of the immediate relational context in which the production of autobiographical performances takes place. This refers to a number of constituents whose interactions appear to have a determinant effect on the performance itself and on its meaning. Yet, the literature in dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies fails to provide a detailed description and analysis of the relational dynamics at play.

Before examining further how the literature on autobiographical performance discusses the relationship between the performer and the audience, the following sub-section considers the way in which the audience has been approached in contemporary performance and arts practice, and scholarly research. This is done with the intention of highlighting important and most recent theoretical and empirical developments in the field of audience studies relevant to the understanding of the object of research in this study.

2.3.3. Theoretical considerations on audience and meaning in performance

Freshwater (2009, p.1) reminds us that ‘the presence of an audience is central to the definition of theatre’. The centrality of the role of the audience in theatre is reflected in the seminal work of influential theatre scholars of the twentieth century. Meyerhold for instance, as early as 1907, highlighted ‘the fundamental theatrical relationship of performer and spectator’ (Meyerhold, 1991, p.52). Grotowski in 1964 defined theatre as ‘what takes place between spectator and actor’ (Grotowski, 1991, p.32). Brook described how the relationship with an audience ‘gives theatre its fundamental meaning’ (Brook, 1987, p.234). In addition, the valorisation of the relationship between performer and audience resulted in new forms of theatre that reassessed not only the position of the spectator but also the role of theatre in relation to the spectator. Brecht, for instance, developed a type of theatre directly aimed at addressing the consciousness of the spectator and, as he explained in 1950, allowing ‘the

spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view' (Brecht, 1964, p.125). Boal (1996) developed a participatory type of theatre whereby the capacity for action of the spectator is actively solicited as a way of rehearsing strategies for concrete social change.

If these approaches have contributed to an important shift in contemporary theatre practice by revisiting the role of the audience and renegotiating the distance between actor and spectator, they have been accompanied by changes in the way the production of art and its meaning have been envisaged, most notably in the domains of literary, cultural and performance theory. The theoretical writings of Barthes (1977), Rancière (2011), Bourriaud (2002), Kester (2004) and Fischer-Lichte (2008) have contributed to a re-evaluation of the mechanisms of art production and of our understanding of it, in the light of the particular relationship between the artist, the art object and the recipient as reader, viewer or spectator.

The work of the French structuralist Roland Barthes signals a change in the understanding of texts and their meaning. Barthes (1977) claimed the 'death of the author' to suggest a hermeneutic of text that is no longer centred on the intention of the author, but rather on the domain of experience of the reader. Barthes argues that writing signals a passage into symbolic structures that transcend the voice of the creator but is also an assemblage of other texts from which its meaning derived. This decentring in the work of interpretation from the author to the reader is also characteristic of reception theory (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1989), that has found particular applications in the fields of theatre and performance in relation to the role played by audience (Bennett, 1997). Reception theory suggests how the meaning of a text is not to be found intrinsically within it, but rather in the relationship and transaction between it and its reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). Bennett applies much of this paradigm to suggest an understanding of theatre based on the productive role of the audience as 'active creator of the theatrical event' (Bennett, 1997, p.9). Bennett refers substantively to the work of the philosopher Jacques Rancière (2011) who, in his essay *The Emancipated Spectator*, argues for a recognition of the thinking and critical capacities of the spectator as individual subject. Rancière (ibid., p.13) defines the spectators as 'active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them'. For Rancière, the spectator is a subject of knowledge who, from his/her particular position of 'intelligence' (ibid., p.17), actively participates in the performance event. He describes how this active role results in the production of a 'third thing' (ibid., p.15) whose meaning transcends artist and spectator whilst being at the same time the unique expression of both. As noted above, an explicit reference to the work of Rancière was made in the

dramatherapy literature to suggest the active role played by the spectator in the production of autobiographical performance and its meaning (Seymour, 2016).

Preceding Rancière, Bourriaud (2002) coined the term 'relational aesthetics' to describe a type of artistic production that takes as its subject and object the domain of inter-human relationships. For Bourriaud, relational art is defined by its ability to reflect and create relations and encounters between individuals. If Bourriaud does not directly discuss the concept in the context of contemporary theatre practices, he locates the art work in the relationship that is forged through it, and its meaning in a 'collective elaboration' (ibid., p.15) in which the viewer is a 'direct interlocutor' (ibid., p.43). As we have seen in the review of the dramatherapy literature, Bourriaud significantly influenced how Sajnani (2016) understands the particular role of aesthetics in creating connection and resonance between performer and spectator in autobiographical performance.

The concept of 'dialogical aesthetics' developed by Kester is, like Bourriaud's formulation, another aesthetic form that envisages the relational exchanges between artists and viewers, or spectators, as the 'locus of the work' of art (Kester, 2004, p.90). It describes a specific practice whereby the production of art and its meaning primarily consists in the 'process of collaborative interaction' (ibid., p.88) between two subjective entities mutually engaged with one another. For Kester, the work of art is defined as 'a process of communicative exchange rather than a physical object' (ibid., p.90). In the field of performance theory, Fischer-Lichte outlines an aesthetics of performance, very similar to the one developed by Kester, based on 'a reciprocal relationship of influence' (Fischer-Lichte, 2008, p.50) between actors and spectators, and characteristic of particular contemporary performance practices[11]. Fischer-Lichte describes how such performances are generated and constituted through an 'autopoietic feedback loop' (ibid., p.51) whereby the experiences, reactions and responses of the spectators 'actively partake in the creation of the performance' (ibid., p.157). Fischer-Lichte observes that the meaning of such performances is based on the particular ways in which they are perceived by those engaged in them. As she writes, 'the act of perception

[11] Fischer-Lichte provides a large number of examples of such performance practices, amongst which is the work of the performance artist Marina Abramović (Phelan, 2004). Other examples of collaborative, participatory and relational practices in contemporary performance, such as in immersive theatre (Machon, 2013; White, 2012) and porous dramaturgy (Radosavljević, 2013; O'Grady, 2013), also illustrate the aesthetics of performance outlined by Fischer-Lichte. A critical discussion of these practices exceeds the remits of this thesis as they are not directly focused on autobiographical material.

itself is the condition that creates meaning' (ibid., p.145). Meaning is therefore envisaged as emerging from a particular interactional process within the performance space.

These theoretical considerations are particularly important for the object of this thesis on four main accounts. Firstly, they locate the production of art and its meaning in the relationship between the artist/performer and the viewer/spectator. They emphasise how that process of 'dialogical interaction' (Kester, 2004, p.87) is structural to the art work itself, and how its meaning derives from that particular encounter. Secondly, they recognise the role of the spectator as individual and autonomous subject endowed with their own sense of agency and consciousness. The spectator is envisaged as an active and perceiving agent without whom the art work and its meaning would remain incomplete. This role of 'active co-creator' (Radosavljević, 2013, p.180) emphasises the authoring position of the spectator in the artistic process. Thirdly, these theoretical approaches recognise, to various extents, the particular way in which the relationships and interactions between actors and spectators are mediated through their bodies. Their embodied co-presence (Fischer-Lichte, 2008) not only characterises the art or performance event but also constitutes how that event is experienced and perceived. It creates affective responses that reflect the way in which performance is 'a process that is at once embodied and intersubjective' (Bader and Martin-Iverson, 2014, p.155). Fourthly, these theoretical considerations demonstrate a particular interest for the experience of the viewer/spectator in the production of art and its meaning. Rather than strictly focusing on the semiotic structures of the art work (Aston and Savona, 1991), they enlarge the methodological field by focusing on the phenomenological structures through which the art work is perceived and produced (Bleeker, Sherman and Nedelkopoulou, 2015; Knowles, 2014).

2.3.4. The theatrical experience of the audience

Prior to reviewing how these theoretical approaches are reflected in the relationship between performer and spectator, it is worth noticing with Freshwater (2009) that, despite the increase in collaborative and participatory practices, there is paradoxically a deficit of scholarly research on how spectators experience the theatrical event and how they create meaning from that experience. Equally, if authors like Fischer-Lichte (2016) have argued about the

transformative possibilities of particular aesthetics of performance for the spectator, it remains that the mechanisms of that transformation have gone largely unexplored.

Recent advances in the fields of audience studies and research have demonstrated a greater interest in understanding the theatrical experience from an audience perspective. A key qualitative study carried out by Eversmann (2004) identified four interrelated dimensions of the theatrical experience, namely, the perceptual, cognitive, emotional and communicative. Eversmann describes how these dimensions represent different reactions to the theatrical event and different levels of reception. Recent issues of the journal of audience and reception studies *Participations* in 2015, and of the *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* in 2016 were specifically focused on theatre audiences and spectatorship. Only a few papers in these issues make use of a research framework to understand 'what audiences make of the experience of watching theatre' (Wilkinson, 2015, p.134). Lindelof and Hansen, for instance, carried out a qualitative study to better understand 'the interaction between the performance and the audience in all its complexity' (Lindelof and Hansen, 2015, p.237). Their research shows how the experience of the theatrical event by the audience and their ability to find meaning in it, are particularly influenced by the sensory, artistic and symbolic aspects of that event. In another study, Megson and Reinelt investigated 'the phenomenological and processual experiences of theatre spectators' (Megson and Reinelt, 2016, p.228) with the view to establishing how they attribute value to the performances. The research findings reveal that 'a persistent degree of association between the performances, its social context and the life experience of the spectator' (ibid., p.230), contributes to the sense of value attributed to the performances. Yet, the study fails to explain the mechanisms through which such associations occur.

In a recent review of the literature on audience research, Sedgman (2018) observes that the current challenge is to go beyond the simple experiencing and to understand how the experience of theatre may inform the life experience of spectators. As she writes, 'the methodological challenge is to encourage people to speak about what it [the theatrical event] did to them in the moment, as well as what they have done with the experience since' (Sedgman, 2018, p.314). It can also be argued that the current research on audience and spectatorship has not so far given much consideration to the way in which the experience of the audience may relate, inform or impact on the experience of the performer/actor. Equally, it is worth noting that the path between audience research and autobiographical performance

research remains largely uncharted. If the recent developments in the field of audience studies have not been directly discussed in relation to autobiographical performance, the literature on autobiographical performance does not either provide substantial data on the actual experience of the audience, as will be discussed in the next subsection.

The literature on audience and spectatorship also shows how the cognitive sciences have been used to analyse how the theatre event is experienced, and to deepen an understanding of the processes underlying how the meaning of that event is produced (Falletti, Sofia and Jacono, 2016; McConachie and Hart, 2006; McConachie, 2013). The advances in the fields of cognitive and neurosciences have found particular applications to describe the dynamics of the relationship between the actor and the spectator. They have significantly helped to understand some of the mechanisms underlying the processes of perception, response and meaning making in the theatrical experience.

Two contributions from the cognitive sciences are worth mentioning for their relevance to the object of this thesis. Firstly, the notion of the embodied mind (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 2016) refers to the way in which mental processes are firmly grounded in the experience of the body in its relation to others and the world. In the context of the actor-spectator relationship, De Marinis writes that, 'it is with and in his body that the spectator experiences the performance, this is how he perceives, lives, understands and responds to it' (De Marinis, 2016, p.63). Hart observes how that contribution from the cognitive sciences is indebted to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, and the way in which he understood the body as 'a locus of psychic knowledge and awareness' (Hart, 2006, p.32)[12]. This particular approach suggests an understanding of performance based on sensorimotor perceptions as opposed to a decoding of its symbolic structures (Mancing, 2006). Secondly, the discovery of mirror neurons (Gallese et al., 1996) signals an important shift in the way one experiences and understands others. This discovery translates a process through which, as Knowles (2014, p.88) summarises it, 'the observation of others engaged in a purposeful activity triggers the same response in the brain of observers as it would if they were themselves engaged in that activity'. The mirror neurons therefore contribute to an understanding of another person's actions, intentions and emotions through neural simulation. They have also been associated with the capacity to empathise with others. Quite importantly, the activation of the mirror

[12] I will return to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and to the implications of his philosophy for phenomenological research in Chapter 3 on the methodological framework of the study.

neurons precedes any 'explicit reasoning' (Rizzolatti, Fogassi and Gallese, 2006, p.56) about the meaning of the actions observed. They translate a form of knowledge that can be described as pre-symbolic and pre-reflexive. The existence of mirror neurons has important implications for the way in which meaning is created in performance, particularly for the spectator. Falletti (2016, p.4) describes how the mirror neurons create a 'shared space of action' whereby the intentional acts of others find an immediate neural resonance that engenders its own set of responses.

It is worth underlining, before concluding this section, that, if the developments in cognitive sciences have greatly helped to reveal physiological and embodied mechanisms through which human beings have the capacity to understand the experiences of others, they have been less successful in understanding how that experience of others may actually inform the way in which we understand ourselves. Sedgman describes this in the following terms:

> 'the cognitive sciences are uniquely placed to produce information about what physically occurs within people's bodies and brains while a performance is under way, in isolation such approaches are unable to capture what people do with these experiences' (Sedgman, 2018, p.315).

It can be also noted that the application of the cognitive sciences to the field of performance has not received much attention in the autobiographical performance literature, despite the way in which they unveil significant features of the relationship between performer and spectator.

2.3.5. Autobiographical performance, audience and meaning

There is an agreement in the literature that the relationship and encounter between the performer and the audience is an essential element of autobiographical performance (Heddon, 2013; Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007; Park-Fuller, 2000). The literature indicates that the meaning of the performance emerges from that encounter and is located between the gaze of the performer and the gaze of the spectator (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007). At the same time, as Park-Fuller (2000, p.37) observes, it is also true that 'we need more critical studies that investigate interactive relationships between autobiographical performer and the audience'.

As part of that relationship, the literature mainly focuses on the role of the audience in the production of the performance event and its meaning. Heddon (2013, p.174) suggests that the spectator is 'at the centre of the autobiographical work'. Park-Fuller also acknowledges this central position by arguing that the knowledge and experience shared by the performer is only partial and requires the 'intervention' (Park-Fuller, 2000, p.29) of the spectators for its actualisation. As Heddon (2013, p.174) observes, 'these performances are made with a spectator in mind'. This reflects a particular vision of the audience whose activation completes the staged experience of the performer. Not only do the spectators validate and authorize that experience, they are also recognised as essential interlocutors and collaborators in the process initiated by the performer. As Heddon argues, autobiographical performance is directly addressed to the consciousness of the spectators with the view of allowing 'a creative encounter between the story of the 'other' and the story of the self' (Heddon, 2008, p.139). This perspective on the audience strongly reflects some of the theoretical considerations discussed above, particularly in relation to the authoring role of the spectator in the performance event. It also recognises how 'viewing is an action' (Rancière, 2011, p.13) with possibilities of transformation for those involved, and asserts the relationship and dialogue forged through performance as an essential aspect of its aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002; Kester, 2004).

By contrast, the literature in dramatherapy, as previously reviewed[13], mainly analysed the audience for its validating function with very little consideration for the way in which it actively participates, intentionally or not, in the fabric of the performance. The dramatherapy literature reflects perspectives that primarily discuss the effects of the witnessing audience on the staged experience of the performer. Whereas, the literature in performance and theatre studies is equally concerned with the effects of that experience on the witnessing audience. This contrast mainly reflects the difference between the primary function of autobiographical performance in both fields of practice. Only Sajnani, in the context of therapeutic theatre in dramatherapy, directly raised the question of how the performance can facilitate the 'transformative witnessing' of the spectators' (Sajnani, 2010: p.189), and enable a progressive change in their experience.

[13] See subsection 2.2.5.

A few examples from autobiographical performance practice in the performing arts illustrate how 'audiences are drawn into a relationship with the performer' (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007, p.61), and the particular position of spectators as interlocutors in the production of the performance event and its meaning. I particularly refer here to the work of three performance artists: Robbie McAuley, Adrian Howells and Bryant Keith Alexander.

Robbie McAuley in *Sally's Rape* (1990), as already discussed above, adopts a 'dialogic structure' (Heddon, 2013, p.178) whereby she encourages audience members to share their own stories in response to hers. The spectators become interlocutors in the staged experience by being invited to enter in a dialogue with the performance, and 'to draw connections to their own personal experiences' (Miller and Taylor, 2006, p.177).

The work of Adrian Howells in the fields of autobiographical, one-to-one and intimate performances, demonstrates an active and direct engagement with audiences that challenges the way in which theatrical events are constructed and experienced. His work is most notably characterised by the dynamics of shared moments of experience that are transformative for spectator and performer alike such as, for instance, in *Salon Adrienne* (2005). Heddon and Johnson suggest that Howells found in autobiographical performance a 'structure of exchange' (Heddon and Johnson, 2016, p.19) whereby his own personal story could enter into a dialogue with the stories of others as audience participants. They argue that what is important in Howells' work is the ability of the autobiographical space to become the container of an intimate encounter and dialogic exchange with the audience. As Heddon and Johnson (ibid., p.19) write, 'Howells created a structure to be filled through the encounter itself'. What we learn through Howells' work, is a formulation of autobiographical performance based on a reciprocal process of communicative exchange and the capacity to create connections and meaning through dialogue.

Another singular example is provided by Bryant Keith Alexander who developed the concept of 'generative autobiography' (Alexander, 2000, p.97) to describe 'an articulated audience response to an autobiographical performance' (ibid., p.105). Alexander explains how he devised *Skin flint (or, The Garbage Man's Kid)* as a result of feeling 'empathically connected' (ibid., p.97) to Tami Spry's *Tattoo Stories: A Postscript to Skin*. He describes how generative autobiography 'uses the genre of autobiographical performance, and the occasion of the autobiographical construct, to explore the resonant traces of lived experience'

(ibid., p.105) left by the performer on the spectator. Alexander argues that the witnessing of autobiographical performance creates unique opportunities for 'self-reflection and critique' (ibid., p.111). Generative autobiography is the expression, as he observes, of 'the process of seeing self as other' (ibid., p.104). It directly reflects how autobiographical performance creates opportunities for audience members 'to reflect in turn on the value of their own lives, responding in kind with yet another story (…) about the meaning they have struggled to make of the lives they are living' (Miller and Taylor, 2006, p.186). Generative autobiography is therefore a performative enactment of how 'performance can be a transformational act' (Heddon, 2008, p.3) for the performer and the spectator through connection and resonance. It translates how the encounter between both, in the meeting space of performance, results in a mutual and reciprocal process of 'sharing and shaping meaning' (Alexander, 2000, p.103).

It is worth noting that Alexander offers a rare first-hand account of how his own life experience was informed by the witnessing of an autobiographical performance. As such, it addresses the need within audience research, as underlined by Sedgman (2018), to better understand how the theatrical experience informs the life experience of the spectators, particularly in the context of autobiographical performance. Yet, it remains an isolated study. As was the case in the dramatherapy literature, there is a general lack of data that reflect the actual impact of a performance on the experience of the spectators and how meaningful it is for them. Equally, the mechanisms through which a connection is established between performer and spectator remains largely unexplored in the literature in theatre and performance studies.

2.4. Summary of the review and gaps in existing research

The review of the literature on autobiographical performance in theatre and performance studies has shown how it emerged, as a theatrical genre, in a context radically different from the one in which it originated in dramatherapy. If it can be described as a form of social practice in the performing arts that critically addresses the social positioning of the performer, it is a form of therapeutic practice in dramatherapy that is aimed at healing and transformation. The literature in both fields has revealed a number of underlying dynamic processes that characterise the practice of autobiographical performance, although they are not entirely similar across the two disciplines. Most notably, the literature in theatre and

performance studies has highlighted the significance of the body as receptacle and communicator of experience in autobiographical performance, whereas the literature in dramatherapy has given more emphasis to aesthetic processes as ways of creating connection between performer and spectator.

Both fields of practice agree on how autobiographical performances contribute to the construction of subjectivity and identity. Yet, both also recognise the significance and impact of relational processes on the production of the performance event and its meaning. These processes refer, across both disciplines, to the dynamic relationship between performer and spectator, and to the immediate relational context of the performance involving a number of significant others. With regards to the dynamics between performer and spectator, the literature in dramatherapy has particularly highlighted the effects of the witnessing spectator on the staged experience of the performer. By contrast, the literature in theatre and performance studies has shown how the staged experience of the performer creates a possibility for dialogue with the witnessing spectator, and how this can potentially be transformative.

From the review of practice and existing research in both fields of knowledge, it can be concluded that the literature across both disciplines fails to:

1) provide a detailed description and analysis of the experience of the performer and the spectators in the production of autobiographical performance and in its witnessing,

2) provide a detailed understanding and analysis of the mechanisms that enable a connection between the staged experience of the performer and the lived experience of the witnessing spectator, and how it creates new meanings for both,

3) provide a detailed description and analysis of the relational dynamics at play between those involved in the production and witnessing of autobiographical performance, and their impact on the performance itself and its meaning.

2.5. Research aims

Following the review of the literature in the fields of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies, the aims suggested in the introductory chapter have been reviewed as follows:

1. to investigate the way in which the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy can be described as emerging from a relational and embodied encounter between performers and witnesses within the shared space of performance,

2. to investigate the experience of performing and witnessing autobiographical performance and its impact on the meaning making process for the performer and the witness,

3. to investigate the process of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy,

4. to investigate the implications of the above for dramatherapy theory, practice and research.

2.6. Research questions

In the light of the above, the research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. How might we describe and understand the way in which meaning emerges from relational and embodied processes within a group devising, performing and witnessing autobiographical performances?

2. How might we describe and understand the dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness in the shared space of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, and the way in which it informs the meaning making process?

3. How might we describe and understand the process of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy?

2.7. Epistemological framework

The epistemological framework clarifies the theoretical approach adopted in this research to investigate the particular object of study, namely the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy. It examines how the concept of co-creation, which is axiological in this research[14], reflects a particular epistemological perspective on how meaning is produced. It also provides a rationale for the relevance of such a concept for the study of meaning in autobiographical performance based on the findings of the literature review.

The review of the literature in dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies, has shown that the production of meaning[15] in autobiographical performance results from relational and embodied dynamics within the interpersonal context of the performance, including the relationship between the performer and the spectator, although the mechanisms and processes at play remain largely unexplored. The literature therefore indicates that autobiographical practice reflects how the experiences of the performer and the spectator are profoundly affected, and potentially transformed, by the nature and quality of their encounter. As such, the effects of the performance on their respective subjectivity and identity can be described as a co-creation as a result and expression of that relationship. They reflect reciprocal and mutual processes whereby the experience of one is only made possible through the experience of the other. Their respective capacity to create knowledge is a direct expression of their encounter. Besides, the review of the literature has also shown that the relationship between performer and spectator is mediated through the performance itself. It has shown the significance of aesthetic processes in the production of meaning in autobiographical performance, particularly in enabling a connection between the performed experience of the performer and the experience of the spectator.

Although the term co-creation rarely appears in the literature in autobiographical performance (Hodermarska, Benjamin and Omens, 2016), it nevertheless translates a particular process based on relationships of exchange within the space of performance. These

[14] As suggested in the definition of terms in the Introduction chapter - see subsection 1.4.1.
[15] I refer here to the definition of meaning suggested in the Introduction chapter – see subsection 1.4.2.

exchanges relate to interpersonal and aesthetic processes within the particular context in which the performance is created. The term co-creation does not refer here to given strategies of involvement or collaboration (Philips and Napan, 2016), but rather to a particular way of understanding how meaning is produced within interpersonal and social contexts. It is relevant to the study of autobiographical performance based on the significance of intersubjective relationships within the context in which the performance is produced (Jacques, 2016). It also enables to understand the process of meaning making in performance from a relational perspective that reflects very specific interpersonal and aesthetic dynamics within the shared space of performance.

The epistemological framework of this research (Figure 1) describes how the creation of knowledge and meaning in autobiographical performance emerges from these specific dynamics. It is based on a triangular relationship between performer, spectator and the performance object, that integrates intersubjective and aesthetic processes. I have adapted this triangular relationship from Jones (2005) who referred to it to describe the particular relationship between therapist, client and art object in the arts therapies.

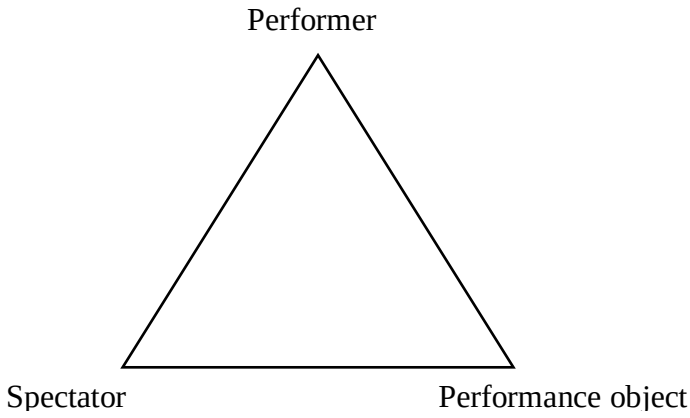


FIGURE 1: Theoretical framework of meaning making in autobiographical performance

Within this framework, the creation of meaning is located at the intersection of intersubjective and aesthetic relationships, and is defined by its betweenness as it does not emerge from each vertex taken in isolation but rather from their interactions. Meaning and knowledge are therefore the expression of relational configurations between performer, spectator and the performance object within the shared space of autobiographical performance. They are also expressions of 'transactions' (Jones, 2005, p.178) between those involved in that space. As Jones suggests, these transactions involve 'opinions, opportunities and limitations, choices, actions and exchanges' (ibid., pp.178-179). It is in these transactions that meaning and knowledge are located, as previously suggested by the application of reception theory to performance[16] (Bennett, 1997).

The epistemological framework can be described in spatial terms as it constitutes a 'transactional zone' (Smagorinsky, 2001, p.146) whereby meaning and knowledge are negotiated between those involved through the aesthetics of the performance object. It corresponds to an 'intersubjective space' (Hodermarska et al., 2015, p.173) or 'intersubjective matrix' (Pitruzzella, 2017, p.23) through which knowledge is produced in interaction with others. This space is grounded in a constructionist theoretical perspective whereby subjectivity and identity are understood as being relationally and socially constructed (Gergen, 2009; Gergen, 1999; Burkitt, 2008). It corresponds to a relational theory of the self that, as I have indicated in the introductory chapter, reflects a second-person

[16] See subsection 2.3.3. above

perspective (de Quincey, 2000) suggesting how consciousness emerges from intersubjective relationships. Besides, it also recognises the significance of cultural and social practices on the construction of subjective experience.

The epistemological framework describes the way in which intersubjective and aesthetic relationships contribute to the creation of meaning and knowledge. Firstly, aesthetic relationships reflect the way in which the aesthetic representation of lived experience in autobiographical performance mediates the relationship between performer and spectator. Equally, that representation is also the expression of that relationship and of the relational dynamic system (Sajnani, 2016) in which the autobiographical performance is created. From a theoretical perspective, aesthetics can therefore be envisaged as a transitional phenomenon (Winnicott, 1971) that mediates human experiencing but also facilitates change, development and individuation.

Secondly, intersubjective relationships reflect the process of encounter within the shared space of autobiographical performance, and how performer and spectator through their reciprocal interactions find themselves engaged in the creation of that shared reality and its meaning. It can be noted that, in a dramatherapy context, the spectator does not solely refer to individual members of the audience but also to the dramatherapist and other group members engaged in the devising of autobiographical performance. Intersubjectivity describes a particular philosophical and ethical approach to human relationships[17] (Buber, 1970; Merleau-Ponty, 2009; Levinas, 1989), but also a process of communication. It is to the latter that intersubjective relationships mainly allude to here, although being philosophically anchored in the former. Owen defines intersubjective relationships as 'interpersonal co-influencing' (Owen, 1995, p.20). Intersubjectivity describes how the interaction with and immediate experiencing of someone as another person produces new possibilities and expanded states of consciousness that can lead to significant change and new meaning (Tronick, 1998). Stern explains how intersubjective consciousness emerges when 'two people cocreate an intersubjective experience in a shared present moment' (Stern, 2004, p.125). Furthermore, intersubjectivity also refers to a 'process of embodied interaction' generating knowledge and meaning[18] (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009, p.465).

[17] This approach constitutes the underpinning of this research as briefly discussed in the Introduction chapter
[18] The notions of intersubjectivity and embodied intersubjectivity will be discussed further in the context of the methodologies adopted in this research. See Chapter 3: Methodological framework - subsection 3.2.2.

In summary, the epistemological framework adopted in this research reflects ways in which knowledge is produced in the context of relational, intersubjective, embodied and aesthetic relationships. This framework has a particular bearing on the identification of research methodologies as will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Structure of chapter:

3.1. Outline

My intention in this chapter is to outline the overall methodological framework of the research. It is also to provide a clear and critical rationale for the choice of methodologies that have been identified as being the most robust to meet the aims of the research, answer the research questions, and ensure consistency with the research epistemological framework. This chapter will discuss in detail the research design, the methods of data collection, the research ethical framework, and the criteria for the evaluation of the findings. It will also present the overall strategy of data analysis that will be carried out in chapter 4.

I locate the overall methodological framework of this study within a qualitative research paradigm (Ritchie et al., 2014) for the following reasons:

- It is a study that is profoundly embedded in the domain of human experience and the way in which the meaning of that experience is constructed.
- It reflects an understanding of identity and subjectivity that are co-constructed as a result of interactions between self and others within given social and cultural contexts and practices.
- It reflects a preference for inductive reasoning and recognizes the active role of the researcher immersed in a process, as opposed to being objectively detached from it.
- It is interested in rigorous and in-depth descriptions, understandings and analyses of processes, as opposed to measurements.
- It places great emphasis on the role that the arts play as vehicles of human experience and as modes of knowing able to unveil and reveal meanings.

Yet, qualitative research remains an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of approaches and methods, and whose historical development has created a very diverse landscape (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The location of this study within the broad field of qualitative research is explained by considering the methodological implications of the epistemological framework described in the previous chapter. These will enable the identification of the most appropriate research methodologies to meet the aims of the research.

The epistemological framework described in the previous chapter suggests how the production of meaning emerges from intersubjective and relational processes resulting from ongoing negotiations and transactions within the shared space of autobiographical performance. It reflects the impact of 'the processes of interaction among individuals' (Creswell, 2013, p.25) on the creation of meaning in the particular context of performance. It points towards a methodology that takes as its unit of analysis (Matusov, 2007) the different levels of relationality within and between individuals, rather than strictly focusing on individuals as is the case in more traditional methodological approaches (Gillespie and Cornish, 2009). In addition, the epistemological framework suggests how the experience of performer and spectator within the shared space of autobiographical performance is mediated through aesthetic processes and the art object of performance itself. It points towards a methodology that envisages performance not only as an object of inquiry but also as a means of inquiry to investigate how aesthetic processes convey and inform personal experience (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Finally, the epistemological framework also reflects ways in which meaning emerges from embodied processes between performer and spectator. An embodied epistemology calls for an embodied methodology (Pelias, 2008) that investigates how the body communicates personal experience and creates meaning in its relation to others.

In the light of the above implications of the epistemological framework, the study adopts a multi-method research design (Morse, 2003) combining two modes of human inquiry within a qualitative paradigm: performance as research and relational phenomenological research. A rationale for the selection of these two methodologies is argued in the following sections by particularly focusing on the type of knowledge that they help to elucidate.

As well as situating the methodological framework of this research within the qualitative paradigm, it is also important to consider, as suggested in the introductory chapter, the location of this study within existing dramatherapy research that has adopted one of the two selected methodological approaches in this study. This is done with the intention of identifying a 'lineage of practice' and research (Sajnani, 2015, p.108). The same will be intended for existing research in the fields of theatre and performance studies.

3.2. Research methodologies and rationale

3.2.1. Performance as research

Greenwood (2012) identifies two main approaches within the paradigm of arts-based inquiry. The first one consists of investigating a particular aspect of the arts themselves or, as she writes, 'a search for a way to understand and describe the complex layers of meaning within an art work or an art form' (Greenwood, 2012, p.3). The second approach uses the arts as tools to study a given phenomenon.

I suggest for this research to be a combination of both approaches suggested by Greenwood, in the sense that it takes as its object the investigation of a specific phenomenon within the theatre genre of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy. But it is also firmly embedded in practice and offers to investigate the phenomenon under study through performance as a method of inquiry and primary means of investigation. It is, as Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes put it, a research 'where practice plays a lead role in the investigative process' (Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes, 2007, p.10). The originality of this study consists in its experiential nature, and in exploring meaning making in autobiographical performance by engaging research participants in devising and witnessing a number of autobiographical performances.

3.2.1.1. Definitions of arts-based research

Before examining how performance has been approached as a methodology for research, it seems important to situate its development within the broader field of arts-based research. The last twenty years have seen a growing interest in arts-based methodologies, and their potentialities as modes of inquiry in their own right (Leavy, 2018; Knowles and Cole, 2008; Biggs and Karlsson, 2010; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Kara, 2015).

The integration of arts-based methods and practices within research in the social sciences, health care, and the arts and humanities covers a large number of approaches that can be quite difficult to distinguish (Hunter, 2009; Fraser and al Sayah, 2011). There is often an overlap between different terminologies such as arts-based research (McNiff, 1998; Leavy, 2009), practice-led research (Smith and Dean, 2009), practice-based research (Candy, 2006) or

practice as research (Nelson, 2006; Nelson, 2013).

In addition, the term ‘practice’ in research can refer to a methodological perspective in the field of psychological therapies research that does not necessarily include the arts as a distinctive method of inquiry. Rather, what is generally known as practice-based evidence designates a particular way of measuring the effectiveness and efficacy of treatment, by collecting data from routine practice, ongoing evaluation (Bager-Charleson, 2014), and by focusing on the experiences of service users and practitioners (Thomas, Stephenson and Loewenthal, 2006).

By contrast, the use of the term ‘practice’ in this study describes research that has an element of artistic practice, either as a vehicle for research and/or as a means of representation and dissemination of the research (Little, 2011). It is situated in a research tradition that makes ‘use of creative processes as research methods’ (Kershaw, 2009: 2). As Fraser and al Sayah write, ‘arts-based research methods are tools that can be used during all phases of qualitative research including data collection, analysis, interpretation, representation and dissemination’ (Fraser and al Sayah, 2011, p.139). It reflects the recognition of the arts as ‘a legitimate and useful’ mode of social inquiry within the qualitative paradigm (Greenwood, 2012, p.2).

McNiff, one of the pioneers in the arts-based research field, defines that particular research approach as,

> ‘the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies’ (McNiff, 2008, p.29).

Leavy writes that arts-based research provides researchers with ‘alternatives to traditional research methods that may fail to “get at” the particular issues they are interested in, or may fail to represent them effectively’ (Leavy, 2009, pp.3-4). Barone and Eisner clarify this point when writing that ‘arts-based research is an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meaning that otherwise would be ineffable’ (Barone and Eisner, 2012, p.1). Finley views arts-based research as a socially engaged methodology that ‘outlines possibilities for transformative praxis’ (Finley, 2008, p.71).

These different definitions delineate the nature and purpose of arts-based research, but they lack in describing the type of knowledge that this methodological approach highlights. Definitions of arts-based research seem incomplete without a clear understanding of the specific 'features of inquiry' of that methodology (Barone and Eisner, 2012, p.8). This is what I intend to focus on by looking more specifically into research methodologies that privilege performance practice within artistic research.

3.2.1.2. Performance-based methodologies

Performance-based methodologies constitute a relatively recent but distinctive category of arts-based research (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011; Leavy, 2014). They cover a range of research practices that are characterised by the use of performance as a means of research and/or an instrument of its dissemination (Little, 2011). They tend to define and refer to performance as 'performance media: theatre, dance, film, video and television' (PARIP, 2006) to the exclusion of other arts media (Riley and Hunter, 2009). They draw on the boundless aspect of performance (Kershaw, 2009) which, as a conceptual framework, cuts across different fields of human inquiry within the social sciences (Worthen, 1998). The following types of research practices can be distinguished within performance-based methodologies:

- performance ethnography (Conquergood, 2006; Denzin, 2003)
- performance autoethnography (Spry, 2016; 2001)
- ethnodrama and ethnotheatre (Saldaña, 2008; 2005)
- performative research (Haseman, 2006; Pelias, 2008)
- performance as research[19] (Arlander et al., 2018; Hadley, 2013; Riley and Hunter, 2009)

It is beyond the remit of this research to review in detail and compare these different methodological approaches, or to discuss the historical development of performance-based methodologies (Arlander et al., 2018; Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011). Yet, it can be noted that, beyond the differences, they all share two important characteristics. Firstly, they are all orientated towards addressing 'social issues with goals of change' (Butler-Kisber, 2010,

[19] This particular research paradigm will be explored further in subsection 3.2.1.7.

p.136). Leavy describes this particular research function in the context of performance autoethnographies:

> 'they are highly reflexive texts that bring the personal into the public domain in ways that highlight links between biographical experience and social, institutional, material, historical context and then, via the performance aspect, seek to disrupt dominant ways of thinking by evoking emotional connections, inspiring social action, and inviting a complex, collaborative negotiation of meaning' (Leavy, 2014, p.350).

Secondly, performance-based methodologies invite a particular type of relationship with the audience as part of the research process. The audience is not only considered as the recipient of the research, but more importantly as an addressee or interlocutor in the production of meaning of the research through transactions enabled by the medium of the performance. As Leavy writes,

> 'a performance constitutes an exchange between the actors-researchers and the audience. A performance can be thought of as "a happening." In this vein, meaning is constructed and multiplied during the transfer. This process involves a negotiation of meanings of which the audience is a constituent part (…) the audience and researcher engage in a complex exchange through which multidimensional meanings emerge' (ibid., p.344)[20].

As a result, performance-based methodologies open spaces for dialogue and interaction. As Leavy suggests, they 'prompt discussion that gives the audience a glimpse into their roles and how they could be configured differently' (Leavy, 2009, p.156). The produced performances are dialogic (Madison, 2006) in the sense that they reflect a knowledge acquired and transmitted in dialogue with others.

Prior to examining the type of insights that can be gained from performance-based methodologies, I will briefly examine how this type of research approach has been applied in the field of theatre and performance research, and dramatherapy research in relation to autobiographical performance.

[20] This aspect of performance-based methodologies will be discussed further in subsection 3.2.1.6. below

3.2.1.3. Performance-based methodologies and autobiographical performance

Based on the literature that I consulted on theatre and performance studies, performance-based methodologies have not been explicitly used to explore or investigate aspects of autobiographical performance practice. Rather, the literature shows an interest in autobiographical approaches to research and for research methodologies that draw on autobiography. This is most notably the case in performance autoethnography (Spry, 2016; 2001) that, as a methodology, incorporates autobiographical data (Leavy, 2014) by examining personal lives in the context of their socio-cultural and historical realities. As Spry writes, 'it interrogates the politics that structure the personal' (Spry, 2001, p.722). As explained above, it is orientated towards awareness raising and social change. It is also the case in ethnodrama and ethnotheatre (Saldaña, 2008) that consist in the translation into performance of biographical data collected through an ethnographic methodology.

In the field of dramatherapy research, Landy suggests 'to look more closely at dramatic ways of knowing that reveal mysteries and yield new knowledge' (Landy, 1984, p.96). Similarly, Jones observes that 'theatre based research can act as a way of exploring and understanding processes at work within dramatherapy practice' (Jones, 1993, p.41). Jones particularly advocates for the use of 'theatre and drama as *research method* and as a *communication of the findings*' (in italics in the text, Jones, 2015, p.89). Sajnani (2015) reviews and provides a comprehensive account of different approaches that fall within performance research practice in dramatherapy. Other authors describe examples of performance-based methodologies in dramatherapy research and evaluation, but it can be noted that, as is the case for research in theatre and performance studies, none of these have been directly applied to the field of autobiographical performance. Only Hodermarska, Benjamin and Omens (2016) provide an account of a performative inquiry in autobiographical performance by exploring the relationship between those involved in the creation of a play and the play itself.

As described above in the context of research in theatre and performance studies, research in dramatherapy illustrates a use of performance-based research methodologies embedded in autobiographical accounts. Existing research does not show a particular focus on investigating aspects of performance practice through means of performance. Sajnani (2013), for instance, provides an example of performance research in dramatherapy that adopted a performance ethnography methodology to explore interlocking forms of suffering and

oppressions. Landy et al. (2012) describe another example of the use of a performance ethnography framework in dramatherapy to examine aspects of therapeutic practice in the context of clinical supervision. Harnden (2014) discusses a performance autoethnography methodology used in an educational context to investigate the emotional impact of working with clients who experienced trauma. Finally, Snow et al. (2017) describe an original methodological framework integrating dramatherapy and ethnodrama to investigate the experience of relationships for people with developmental disabilities.

As suggested above in my critique of the definitions of arts-based research, I now turn to the types of knowledge and 'insights' (Battisti and Eiselen, 2008) that are revealed through the use of performance-based methodologies. I have identified three different types of features that 'advance knowledge in ways different from conventional research methods' (Saldaña, 2008, p.196): aesthetic, embodied and relational knowledge.

3.2.1.4. Aesthetic knowledge

Aesthetic knowledge refers to the artistic forms created in the production of research through practice. Performance-based methodologies, like other forms of arts-based inquiries, are characterised by their representational and symbolic forms quite distinct from the discursive texts in more traditional types of research approaches. As Haseman suggests,

> 'the symbolic form of particular artworks provides a powerful focus for the performative researcher (and their audience) as each symbol functions as a means to conceptualise ideas about aspects of reality, and also as a means of communicating what is known to others' (Haseman, 2006, p.105).

Haseman highlights the way in which aesthetics in performative research not only constitutes a vehicle to represent a particular aspect of lived reality, but also a vehicle of communication between creators and receivers. If the former is associated with a process of meaning making (Norris, 2000), the latter is associated with a process of shared meaning making whereby the art work is invested with liminal qualities. As Alexander suggests (2000, p.100), 'the aesthetic crafting serves as a vehicle for understanding the intimate details of the articulated lived experience for both the performer and the audience'. Jackson (2005) also argues about the centrality of aesthetics in forms of theatre that fulfil particular functions such as being a mode of research activity. Aesthetics in performance-based research appears to be a shared

container that symbolically holds the representation of a particular experience as performed, but also provides a structure for the experiences of others in which they can recognise themselves. It encompasses, as Chilton, Gerber and Scotti write (2015, p.3), 'realities created and co-constructed through aesthetic - sensory and imaginal - knowledge'.

In the context of dramatherapy research, Harnden (2014) provides an example of performance autoethnography whereby the aesthetic forms and images chosen to portray the impact of trauma on personal lives create, for those watching, an emotional connection that can be transformative and integrated into their own personal learning.

3.2.1.5. Embodied knowledge

Embodied knowledge in performance-based methodologies refers to the body as 'a site of knowledge' (Pelias, 2008, p.186) reflecting the physicality and physiology of perception, and the way in which the body internalizes and communicates experience. It represents a non-discursive mode of knowing about ourselves in the world and in our relationships to others (Dolan, 1996). Spry describes how, in the context of performance autoethnography, the body of the researcher is 'the existential nexus upon which the research rotates' (Spry, 2001, p.726). For Spry, the body in research does not only reveal the imprint of power relations within the socio-political context in which it is located, it is also a 'central site of meaning making' (ibid., p.710) whereby some form of agency can be reclaimed. Like Spry, Pelias emphasises the importance of embodiment in performative research as a singular mode of inquiry and representation of experience, capable of generating 'productive insights' (Pelias, 2008, p.186).

In addition, Conquergood also highlights how embodied practice in research reflects 'an intensely sensuous way of knowing' (Conquergood, 2006, p.352). It recognises the role of sensory and motor processes in our capacity for understanding and knowing (Johnson, 2010). In that respect, Karcher and Caldwell describe how, in the context of a performance-based research exploring the somatic effects of oppression, the 'visceral connection' (Karcher and Caldwell, 2014, p.482) enabled through the embodied representation of personal experience can lead to greater awareness and transformation for those watching. Alexander also describes how 'performance methodology engages both performer and audience in a sensuous activity of embodied experience' (Alexandre, 2000, p.99). In the context of

dramatherapy research, Landy et al. show how the body 'holds the truth as much as the words do' (Landy et al., 2012, p.54). Their research suggests how the body mediates knowledge in ways that unravel new layers of meaning. It also shows how the body helps access tacit knowledge and what may otherwise be kept concealed from consciousness.

3.2.1.6. Relational knowledge

Madison describes the way in which performance is 'a meeting of two subjects whose subjectivities grow and deepen from their mutual encounter' (Madison, 2007, p.829). This is what can be described as relational knowledge in performance research that reflects the centrality of the space between the performer and the spectator and how that space, as Leavy writes, facilitates a 'negotiation of meaning of which the audience is a constituent part' (Leavy, 2014, p.344). Norris (2000) also observes that performance-based methodologies produce knowledge that is an expression of the relationality inherent to the art form itself, and of the relationship between those in a performing role and those in a witnessing role. As he writes, 'it is a form of research where the text ceases to be a declarative authorial one but one in which consumers can become producers and vice versa' (Norris, 2000, p.48). Fels offers a similar view when describing how, 'the viewer enters into the telling as it unfolds as a co-performer, recalling his or her experiences, coming to his or her own questions and insights, and through engaging, recognizing the learning offered' (Fels, 2012, p.55).

In the context of dramatherapy research, Sajnani (2013) describes the use of a performance ethnography methodology to explore interlocking forms of suffering and oppressions in a North American context. Sajnani shows how a performance-based methodology enables a particular knowledge to emerge from the relationships and interactions with others as fellow performers or audience members. For Sajnani, that knowledge produced through performance is a direct result of the interconnectedness of the lived experience of performers and spectators.

In summary, performance-based methodologies are based on forms of knowledge (Borgdorff, 2010) that are relevant to the object of study in this thesis. The above description of three types of knowledge provides a rationale for the use of such a methodological approach to examine the role of aesthetic, embodied and relational processes in the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy.

I now turn to the description of a specific type of performance-based methodology that has been selected for the way in which it provides a framework for the study of a particular aspect of performance through performance practice.

3.2.1.7. Performance as research (PAR)

Within the broad spectrum of performance-based methodologies, I focus on performance as research as the most appropriate and useful methodological framework to address the aims of this study (Arlander et al., 2018; Lewis and Tulk, 2016; Riley, 2013; Riley and Hunter, 2009). This is because of the way in which performance as research integrates the different modes of knowing outlined above (Arlander, 2018; Saner, 2018). I particularly refer here to the methodology, commonly designated by the acronym PAR, developed by the Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies (ADSA), and that Hadley defines as the pursuit of 'a specific line of scholarly investigation or research into performance by means of performance' (Hadley, 2013, p.4). This approach has been adopted for the way in which it provides methodological guidelines on its implementation (Hadley, 2013; Richards 1995; 1992).

In a foundational text on PAR, Richards (1992) raises the question of what performance as a mode and method of research demonstrates that is unavailable through any other methodological means:

> 'research into for example relational and interactional, emotive/expressive (…) and other communicative body based capacities used by the performer or in the performer-audience transaction (…) can be most immediately addressed through performance itself' (Richards, 1992, p.4).

Richards also observes that PAR is characterized by a desire to identify clear criteria to differentiate between 'academic research by means of performance' (ibid., p.3) and other professional performance practices. It is therefore motivated by a commitment to rigorous research practice, reflection and openness (Hadley, 2013) that has resulted in a set of guidelines and a framework for conducting PAR. Richards provides a description of the methodological framework which includes:

- the relationship ‘between the performance making activity and the research activity’ (Richards, 1995, p.7);
- the role(s) of the researcher in the research process;
- the identification of appropriate criteria for the assessment and analysis of performance in relation to the research questions.

This framework will support the development of the overall strategy of data analysis outlined below[21].

3.2.1.8. Limitations

The validity of performance as research remains contested, which highlights the limitations of such a methodological approach (Riley and Hunter, 2009). The issue of validity reflects a tension between discursive and non-discursive types of representation, and whether these are or are not considered as legitimate forms of knowledge production within academic research (Hughes et al., 2011). This has resulted in requiring, as Nelson writes (2013, p.9), ‘more labour and a broader range of skills to engage in a multi-mode research inquiry than more traditional research processes and, when well done, demonstrate an equivalent rigour’.

This criticism of artistic practice in research has spurred two distinct responses. The first one has been to expect the research practice to be accompanied by an exegesis that, as Little suggests (2011, p.26), ‘details and extrapolates on the research process, explaining methodological and conceptual frameworks, detailing the work and findings in a reflective and critical manner’. Candy relays similar expectations when writing that ‘the outcomes of practice must be accompanied by documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and to demonstrate critical reflection’ (Candy, 2006, p.2). In the context of performance as research, Hadley notes that,

> ‘those operating in this paradigm often also accompany their Performance as Research with a range of documentation, discussion and analysis which draws readers’ attention to the innovations presented in the performance practice, what they mean for the field in which the practice takes place, and when, where, how and why they are likely to be useful to other artists and scholars working in this field’ (Hadley, 2013, p.3).

[21] See section 3.4.

The second response has been to integrate and link performance as research with other methodological approaches to reflect a mixed methods design (Hadley, 2013). Hadley argues that researchers should act confidently when integrating different methodological positions as long as it is based on rigour and supports the clarity of the argument.

These limitations have encouraged me to adopt a research design that incorporates performance as research with another methodological approach, with the view of ensuring a richer and deeper analysis of the data. I refer to this as a multi-method design to describe the use of two or more research methods within the same methodological paradigm (Morse, 2003), and whose 'results are then triangulated to form a complete whole' (Esteves and Pastor, 2003, p.70). This creates a strategy that, as writes Brewer (2006, p.4), 'attacks a research problem with an arsenal of methods that have non overlapping weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths'.

3.2.2. Relational phenomenological research

In response to the above limitations, it feels important to identify a second methodological approach that enables a critical understanding of the processes leading to the development and devising of autobiographical performances, and of the lived and embodied experience of the participants as performers and spectators. This had led me to consider a phenomenological framework to meet these demands and, as Leavy writes (2009, p.226), 'merge art and the study of perceptual consciousness'.

In this section, I start by looking at the nature of phenomenological inquiry, before considering existing research in dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies within that particular approach. As was the case for the performance-based methodologies, I then focus on the type of knowledge that can be highlighted through a phenomenological type of methodology, by particularly concentrating on the work of the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This will constitute the main rationale for the choice of a phenomenological framework. I conclude by identifying a specific phenomenological methodology, relational phenomenological inquiry, for the way in which it focuses on relationality and embodiment in the research process.

3.2.2.1. Definition of phenomenological research

Phenomenology originates in the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) who developed an original philosophical approach that takes as its object the way in which our individual experience of the world accounts for our knowledge of it (Husserl, 2012). Phenomenology is described by Creswell as a 'philosophy without presuppositions' (Creswell, 2013, p.77). It aims at describing phenomena, in the sense of objects of human experience, as they present themselves to consciousness. As Willig writes, 'phenomenology is interested in the world as it is experienced by human beings within particular contexts and at particular times' (Willig, 2008, p.52). It became an extremely influential movement in the development of Western philosophy in the twentieth century and evolved into a distinct approach to human inquiry and research in the human and social sciences (Creswell, 2013).

Adams and van Manen define phenomenological research as,

> 'the study of lived or experiential meaning and attempts to describe and interpret these meanings in the ways that they emerge and are shaped by consciousness, language, our cognitive and noncognitive sensibilities, and by our preunderstandings and presuppositions' (Adams and van Manen, 2008, p.615).

A phenomenological approach suggests that consciousness is intentional, in the sense that it results from the perception of certain phenomena whose meaning derives from the way they are perceived (Sages and Lundsten, 2009). The aim of phenomenological research is therefore to provide a detailed description of what a particular experience is like for the individuals who live it (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell observes that 'a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. (…) This description consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it' (Creswell, 2013, p.76).

Phenomenological research is associated with the phenomenological method that describes a particular way of conducting research and that constitutes an important aspect of what can be described as a phenomenological study (Finlay, 2014). Moustakas (1994) identifies four different constituents that characterise the singularity of the phenomenological method:

1. Epoché (or bracketing) describes a process that 'requires the suspension of presuppositions and assumptions, judgements and interpretations to allow ourselves to become fully aware of what is actually before us' (Willig, 2008, p.53). Finlay (2014) describes it as an expression of the phenomenological attitude whereby our acquired and familiar understandings, beliefs and certainties are set aside in order to fully apprehend the phenomenon under study.

2. Phenomenological reduction describes how the research aims at 'returning to things themselves' (Moustakas, 1994, p.90). Its object is to delve into the nature of experience itself in order to reveal its essential features. Adams and van Manen (2008, p.617) write that reduction 'aims to bring into focus the uniqueness of the phenomenon to which we are oriented'. Finlay highlights how the reduction in the analysis of data seeks 'to capture something of implicit horizons of meaning and prereflective experience' (Finlay, 2012, p.185).

3. Imaginative variation refers to the way in which a phenomenological analysis focuses not only on a 'textural description' of what is experienced, but also on a 'structural description' of how it is experienced (Creswell, 2013, p.80). According to Moustakas (1994, p.98), the aim of imaginative variation is to identify 'the conditions that must exist for something to appear' and without which it wouldn't be what it is. This involves, as Adams and van Manen suggest, critical considerations of different viewpoints such as 'lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality)' (Adams and van Manen, 2008, p.619).

4. Synthesis of meaning characterizes the last step of a phenomenological analysis. It refers to 'the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole' (Moustakas, 1994, p.100). It is commonly associated with eidetic reduction (Finlay, 2014).

In what follows, I intend to discuss the type of knowledge and insights that can be revealed through a phenomenological approach to research. Prior to that, I will briefly examine how phenomenological research has been applied in the field of theatre and performance research, and dramatherapy research, especially in the context of autobiographical performance.

3.2.2.2. Phenomenological research and autobiographical performance

Phenomenology has found applications in the fields of theatre and performance studies as a theoretical and methodological framework, even though, as reminds Hart (2006), historically less prominent than other approaches. Amongst the proponents of a phenomenological exploration of theatre, Wilshire, in his seminal work, proposed the use of phenomenological methods to understand the formative influence of 'mimetic involvement with others' on personal identity (Wilshire, 1982, p.17). Bleeker et al., recently, wrote that 'phenomenology has provided contemporary performers with a language for thinking how bodies operate and create meaning between each other' (Bleeker et al., 2015, p.4). This has resulted in particular attention being given to the way in which embodied and relational processes structure the experience of performance. Doyle (2013) explored another phenomenological dimension of theatre by describing it as a lived moment of emotional involvement that can be transformative but equally disturbing and controversial. By describing how performance moves and affects us, Doyle also echoes how Kozel (2012) discussed the way in which a phenomenological approach to performance research helps to access sensory and affective experience. For Kozel, affect relates to 'bodily state encompassing emotion, spirit, vitality, imagination, and memory' (ibid., p.212) that emerges from resonance and connection within the performance space. Despite these contributions, it can be noted that a phenomenological understanding of and approach to performance has not been directly applied to the experience of autobiographical performance.

With regards to dramatherapy research, Jones suggests that the phenomenological approach offers a 'useful perspective on the nature of the therapy space' (Jones, 2007, p.72). Zografou (2012) also makes the case for phenomenological research enhancing practice in the arts therapies. A number of dramatherapy researches have adopted a phenomenological methodological framework, but in areas of practice not directly involving performance (Papagiannaki & Shinebourne, 2016; Chapman, 2014; Redfern, 2014; Godfrey and Haythorne, 2013; Amundson, 2005). Only Romanelli, Tishby and Moran (2017) described how they used a phenomenological analysis, within a mixed-methods design, to understand the effects of theatre improvisation skills on the clinical abilities of therapists to engage with their clients.

In the particular context of research in the field of autobiographical performance in

dramatherapy, very few studies make reference to a phenomenological type of analysis. Dokter and Gersie (2016) and Seymour (2016) carried out qualitative research investigating the experience of students devising autobiographical performances as part of their training. Despite a focus on lived experience, these researches did not adopt a formal phenomenological methodological framework. The research literature in dramatherapy indicates that a phenomenological methodological framework has only been cautiously applied to the experience of autobiographical performance for performers and audience members.

I now turn to the type of knowledge and insights that are produced through a phenomenological approach to research. I focus on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty for its relevance to the aims of this study and to the epistemological framework of the research, particularly in relation to the significance of relational and embodied processes in the production of knowledge. From a review of the literature on phenomenological research influenced by the work of Merleau-Ponty, I have isolated three particular modes of knowing: embodied, intercorporeal and intersubjective.

3.2.2.3. Embodied knowledge

As a philosophy, phenomenology evolved into three main branches to which correspond three different research approaches (Kafle, 2011):

- transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 2012)
- hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962)
- existential phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 2009)

The phenomenology developed by Merleau-Ponty most notably suggests how the perception and experience of the world are primarily mediated through the lived body. As he wrote, ‘we are in the world through our body (…) and we perceive the world with our body’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p.239). As a philosophy, it contributed to the emergence of an embodied phenomenological approach to research (Todres, 2007).

For Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is not only inseparable from the world it inhabits, it is also profoundly embedded in the body (Langdridge, 2007). As Gardiner (1998, p.133) observes,

'our world is not a tableau of inert objects and things that we apprehend passively, but a living and complexly interacting medium in which we as body-subjects are enmeshed'. Consciousness in that sense is an expression of a dialectic relationship between the body and the world where it is located (Sadala and Adorno, 2002). The actual experience of perception reflects, for Merleau-Ponty, how we experience ourselves as bodies engaged in the world but also how we experience the world through our bodies. As he wrote, 'the perceiving mind is an incarnated mind' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p.3). Embodied knowledge therefore refers to the way in which the body creates knowledge based on its experience of the world, but also to the way in which it creates new experience based on that initial knowledge.

If Husserlian phenomenology claims that knowledge derives from conscious awareness of the world as it appears to us, Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology suggests that the experience of the body in the world corresponds to a pre-reflective and pre-symbolic mode of knowledge. The body is envisaged as the primary source of knowing that predates all other forms of human understanding. 'All consciousness, writes Merleau-Ponty, is perceptual consciousness' (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p.459). Thus, perception is primarily an embodied as opposed to a cognitive process (Moran, 2000). The insistence on the pre-reflective and pre-symbolic dimensions of human experience led to the emergence of the concept of embodied consciousness, that describes how the direct sensory and motor experiences of the body shapes our understanding of ourselves and the environment around us, and our capacity to orientate ourselves in the world.

It can be noted that the significance of embodied processes in the construction of experience as outlined by Merleau-Ponty, has been particularly influential in the development of cognitive science (Gallagher, 2012; Hart, 2006) and of the notion of embodied cognition (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 2016). Adams defines it as the way in which 'cognition takes place not only in a central system but in the perceptual and motor systems as well' (Adams, 2010, p.619)[22].

[22] The relevance of the cognitive sciences to the experience of the audience in theatre and performance was reviewed in Chapter 2: Critical review of the context of the research - subsection 2.3.4.

3.2.2.4. Intercorporeal knowledge

Merleau-Ponty elaborated on his views of the body in the constitution of experience by developing the notions of intercorporeal communication (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b) and intertwining (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). This led to the emergence of the term intercorporeality in the literature on embodied phenomenological research, that remains a rich concept for an understanding of human experience and meaning (Csordas, 2008; Trigg, 2013; Tanaka, 2015).

Intercorporeality reflects how our 'insertion into the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p.419) is from the start intertwined with the bodies of others, that not only provide sustenance but are also intimately associated with our ability to create meaning out of an experience. Trigg suggests that this pre-personal and 'pre-reflective bodily reciprocity between ourselves and others, originally experienced in childhood, retains a presence in our ability to recognise ourselves in others' (Trigg, 2013, p.420). Intercorporeality is therefore an expression of how self and other co-constitute one another as a result of their reciprocal embodied relationship. They are both affected by their mutual experience as they both engage in exchanges and interactions that do not belong to one or the other but rather to 'the "in-between" of self and other' (Tanaka, 2015, p.465). As Merleau-Ponty wrote, 'they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither is the creator' (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p.413). This intertwining translates 'an overlapping that produces a unified experience' (Moran, 2013, p.286). Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009, p.465) name it 'mutual incorporation' to describe how each of the two subjects 'behaves and experiences differently from how they would do outside of the process, and meaning is co-created in a way not necessarily attributable to either of them'.

3.2.2.5. Intersubjective knowledge

Within the context of the embodied phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, intercorporeality is not solely the basis of human perception but also the foundation of intersubjectivity. Both terms are phenomenologically inseparable. They both reflect a process whereby the relationship between self and other is sealed in a common destiny. As Trigg (2013, p.413) writes, 'the corporeal basis of intersubjectivity means that our lived experience of the world is mediated via our bodily relations with others'. For Merleau-Ponty, the subject can be

described as being born into intersubjectivity. As he writes, ‘the very first of all cultural objects, and the one by which all the rest exist, is the body of the other person’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p.406). For Merleau-Ponty, self and other form a ‘system’ (ibid., p.410) whereby they are both engaged in a reciprocal process of meaning making that is structural to their respective experience. The concept of the chiasm in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomeneology (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) translates how self and other ‘cross-fertilize’ (Adams, 1999, p.51). As Cohn (1993, p.484) writes, ‘meaning and significance occur not within subjects but between them’. Cornejo also underlines how meaning, from a phenomenological perspective, is an ‘intersubjective creation’ that reflects an ontological position of ‘being-in-the-world-with-others’ (Cornejo, 2008, p.171).

Furthermore, adds Mearleau-Ponty, the subject is only partially visible to itself. As he wrote, ‘I am not transparent for myself’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2009, p.410). As Gardiner (1998, p.135) suggests, ‘in the encounter with another self, I have access to an external viewpoint through which I am able to visualize myself as a meaningful whole’. Intersubjectivity therefore refers to a communicative process in which self and other are engaged as interlocutors in reciprocal exchanges whereby they relationally constitute one another and widen their respective horizon. Since this process is also embodied through the intertwining of the body of the self with the body of the other (Merleau-Ponty, 1968), it can be described as an embodied intersubjectivity (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009).

In summary, the above description of the three types of knowledge provides a rationale for the use of a phenomenological framework to examine the significance of embodied, intersubjective and relational processes in the description of experience, particularly when applied to the field of autobiographical performance. It also addresses the limitations of a performance-based methodology by grounding the art work into the experience of its producers and viewers.

I now turn to the description of the specific type of phenomenological methodology that I have selected for the way in which it provides a framework that focuses on relationality and embodiment in the research process.

3.2.2.6. Relational phenomenological research

Finlay reminds that various ways, or 'variants' (Finlay, 2014, p.121), of conducting phenomenological research have emerged following the way in which the field of phenomenological philosophy has evolved. Finlay (2008, p.3) also suggests that 'different forms are demanded according to the type of phenomenon under investigation and the kind of knowledge the researcher seeks'. With this in mind, I suggest that a relational phenomenological approach is particularly responsive to the phenomenon under investigation in this research, namely the way in which the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy emerges from different levels of interactions and relationality within the space in which that performance is created and performed. Furthermore, this approach also integrates the different modes of knowing described above.

Relational-centred phenomenology was developed by Finlay (2011; 2009a), and Finlay and Evans (2009), who considered how knowledge produced in research is first and foremost the result of relational and embodied processes. Finlay and Evans suggest that the aim of a relational approach to phenomenological research is, 'to describe and explore the subjective meanings that arise in lived experience and through dialogue' (Evans and Finlay, 2009, p.6). For Finlay, data emerge from a particular set of interactions and relationships within the research context:

> 'what we can learn and know about another arises within the intersubjective space between. In this zone of ambiguity and uncertainty, the unforeseen hovers and layered meanings invite discovery' (Finlay, 2009a, p.1).

Data is therefore seen to be 'co-created in the embodied dialogical encounter' (Evans and Finlay, 2009, p.6) between researcher and participant, but also between participants themselves in the context of a research group. A focus on relationship within that space between those involved in the research process helps elucidate the nature of 'intersubjective meanings' (Finlay, 2005, p.287). A relational phenomenological approach therefore focuses on the experience of research participants in a given context, but also on the relational processes from which that experience emerges, and on the relational dynamics that influence and contribute to the production of data.

Finlay outlines how a relational approach to phenomenological research is characterised by addressing four interlinked dimensions: 'open presence, embodied intersubjectivity, dialogic co-creation and entangled selves' (Finlay, 2009a, p.1):

1. Open presence refers to the critical ability of the researcher 'to be emotionally and bodily present, earnestly listening to the other' (ibid., p.5). It can be considered as an extension of the epoché as previously described in the phenomenological method, and to the researcher's capacity for reflection.

2. Embodied intersubjectivity emphasises the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of embodied experiences in the research process. It reflects how personal experience is embodied, but also affected by the embodied experience of others.

3. Dialogic co-creation corresponds to 'how people in relation impact on each other at many levels, both conscious and unconscious, in reciprocal, mutual influence' (Finlay, 2009a, p.8). It refers to the co-construction of experience emerging from an encounter between those involved in the research process.

4. Entangled selves reflect the complexities of bringing 'a host of past relational and social selves into any one encounter' (Finlay, 2009a, p.12). This refers to the different personal and relational histories and identities brought into the research process by the research participants and the researcher, but also to the larger discursive and social context in which they are located.

These four dimensions reflect different 'layers of relational processes' (Finlay and Evans, 2009, p.127) that appear particularly relevant to the object of this research and that will be integrated in the analysis of the data as outlined below in the overall strategy of data analysis[23].

[23] See section 3.4.

3.3. Research design

This section discusses the overall design of the research. This includes the recruitment of the research participants, the criteria for participation in the research, the ethical framework, the methods of data collection, and the performance workshop design.

The research design consisted of three different stages:

- Stage 1: recruitment of the research participants and individual pre-project interviews;

- Stage 2: performance workshop consisting of a weekly session of three hours for 20 weeks between October 2014 and March 2015. The content of the sessions varied and included group work, devising, rehearsals, performances and focus groups. The design of the performance workshop will be looked at in more detail in subsection 3.3.5. below;

- Stage 3: post-project individual interview with each of the research participants who completed the performance workshop.

The following table summarises the three different stages of the research design:

STAGE 1 (April-September 2014): Recruitment phase and pre-project individual interviews with potential research participants

STAGE 2 (October 2014-March 2015): 20-week performance workshop

Week 1 Group session	Week 2 Group session	Week 3 Group session	Week 4 Group session	Week 5 Rehearsals	Week 6 First performance	Week 7 First focus group
Week 8 Group session	Week 9 Group session	Week 10 Group session	Week 11 Rehearsals	Week 12 Second performance	Week 13 Second focus group	

Week 14 Group session	Week 15 Group session	Week 16 Group session	Week 17 Rehearsals	Week 18 Rehearsals	Week 19 Third performance	Week 20 Third focus group and closure

STAGE 3 (April-June 2015): Post-project individual interviews

3.3.1. Research participants

The research was initially open to postgraduate students, research students and alumni with an interest in the research topic and its aims. A sheet detailing the outline of the research was produced with information about its nature, purpose and aims, as well as what could be expected and a confidentiality proviso. The research was advertised in the different faculties at Anglia Ruskin University but also within other academic and professional organisations through electronic mailing lists, such as SCUDD (The Standing Conference of University Drama Conferences), CIPN (The Cambridge Interdisciplinary Performance Network), CRASSH (The Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities) and BADth (British Association of Dramatherapists). The research was intentionally not confined to performing arts or dramatherapy students or alumni in order to embrace diversity and include people from various walks of life and with a range of interests.

Given the positive but limited response from the initial recruitment phase, it was decided to open the study to undergraduate students within the Music and Performing Arts Department[24] at Anglia Ruskin University. As a result of the recruitment phase, a total of thirteen potential participants were invited to take part in an individual pre-project interview. Three of them decided to withdraw after the interview due to changes in personal circumstances. Ten participants agreed to take part in the 20 weeks long performance workshop. Three of them dropped out in the first two weeks for personal reasons or because they were no longer able to commit themselves to the duration of the project. This left seven participants who completed the workshop and took part in the post-project individual interviews. Six of them had links with Anglia Ruskin University. Two were undergraduate students, one was a

[24] Known as The School of Performance since September 2018

postgraduate student, one was a research student, and two were alumni. The remaining participant had links with another academic institution. Five participants were female and two were male. Five were of British origin, one of another European descent, and one of Asian origin. A more detailed profile of the ten research participants will be provided in the next chapter[25].

3.3.2. Criteria for participation

As part of the recruitment phase, each participant was made aware of the criteria for participation in the research. The initial pre-project interview was therefore introduced, not only as a way for the potential participants to become familiar with its aims and procedures, but also as a form of assessment and selection to determine the suitability of the participants. The criteria for participation in the research were identified as follows:

- having a clear understanding of the aims of the research,
- having a clear understanding that the group would primarily be a research group and not a therapy group,
- demonstrating a willingness to work in a group and to engage with others in open dialogue,
- demonstrating a willingness to work towards a number of public performances and an understanding of the implications of this with regards to confidentiality,
- demonstrating a commitment to share with the group or the researcher personal difficulties, as they might arise, as a result of the group work,
- demonstrating a commitment to regular attendance and to the whole research project.

All the participants/volunteers who took part in the pre-project interview met the criteria for participation and were accepted for the research.

3.3.3. Ethical framework

Working with human subjects requires the highest level of ethical standards, attitude and commitment in order to ensure the safety of those engaged in research, and to preserve the confidentiality of information (Farrant et al., 2014). The question of ethics is particularly

[25] See section 4.2. in Chapter 4: Analysis of data and preliminary findings

important in the context of autobiographical performance whereby aspects of the self are disclosed in front of others through means of theatrical representation.

The ethical implications of that relationship between self and other in autobiographical performance have been explored in the fields of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies. Both perspectives emphasise the issue of ethical care (Heddon, 2009), and the responsibilities involved in the practice of autobiographical performance. The literature in theatre and performance studies has most notably addressed two aspects of 'ethical responsibility' (Heddon, 2009, p.113) in autobiographical performance. The first one refers to the way in which others are represented or 'storied' (ibid., p.128) by the autobiographical performer. Park-Fuller talks about the responsibility of 'speaking for others' (Park-Fuller, 2000, p.29) whose experiences are intertwined with the experience of the performer, and whose representation fulfils a particular function in the fabric of the performance. The second one refers to the responsibility of 'speaking with others' as audience members (ibid., p.34). As we have seen from the review of the literature, the relationship between performer and audience constitutes an essential aspect of autobiographical performance[26]. Examples from practice have shown how the relationship to audience members actualises and completes the performance, and how it fulfils a particular function towards social change, empowerment or dialogue. Different performance strategies used for that purpose raise issues about their ethics, and about the different positions in which the spectator is put, physically or psychologically, as witness (Kartsaki, Zehiran and Lobel, 2012). They prompt ethical questions about the effects of the performances on the experience of the spectators and on their sense of safety, and how much preparation they should receive prior to the performances (Park-Fuller, 2000).

As is the case for the literature in theatre and performance studies, the dramatherapy literature also addresses the notion of ethical responsibility towards the audience in autobiographical performance. Hodermarska, Benjamin and Omens (2016, p. 258) discuss ethics in terms of 'values relating to actions taken or not taken'. They approach and discuss the ethics of a performance by relating it to the aesthetic choices that guide its creation. The ethical responsibility of the performer for the audience is therefore, according to them, located in the aesthetic decisions made by the performer, and in their ability to modulate the aesthetic

[26] See subsection 2.3.5. in Chapter 2: Critical review of the context of the research

distance within the performance in order to create an ethical relationship with those watching. As we have seen through the review of the dramatherapy literature[27], aesthetic processes in autobiographical performance are critical in enabling a connection between performer and spectator. Like Hodermarska, Benjamin and Omens, Sajnani (2016) suggests how they are inseparable from the ethics of the performance.

Besides, the literature in dramatherapy addresses the question of ethics in autobiographical performance by looking at risks and responsibilities. The issue of risks is discussed from the perspective of the performer and the audience. With regard to the performer, the discussion focuses on safe practice by flagging up the potential risks of putting oneself, as performer, on an 'emotional edge' (Emunah, 1994, p.224). Not only are the risks attached to the working through of unresolved or current issues (Emunah, 2015), they are also associated with the act of performing in front of an audience whose reaction remains largely unpredictable, despite the general practice to perform for a selected audience. The risks are associated here with an increased sense of vulnerability as a result of their exposure to performances that may portray distressing experiences (Emunah, 2016). Hodermarska et al. (2015) raise the question of how to assist the audience in the witnessing of autobiographical performance and what level of preparation may be required. They also observe that strategies to manage risks never totally eliminate the possible discrepancy between the intention of the performer and the experience of the audience.

As we have seen in the review of the literature in dramatherapy, the presence of the dramatherapist as director or facilitator is a singular feature of autobiographical performance[28]. It implies a particular responsibility because of the code of ethics and the standards of professional practice that guide their conduct. The dramatherapist is primarily responsible for the well-being of the performer by providing 'healing directions' (Emunah, 2015, p.75). But it can also be argued that their responsibility exceeds their relationship with the performer by providing a caring and 'holding environment' (Hodermarska et al., 2015, p.177) for all those involved in the production and witnessing of autobiographical performances.

[27] See subsection 2.2.4. in Chapter 2: Critical review of the context of the research
[28] See section 2.2.6. in Chapter 2

As a dramatherapist conducting the research[29], the notion of ethical care became for me akin to a duty of care for the participants/volunteers, a commitment to protect them from harm, to ensure personal and emotional safety, to manage risks, and to prevent exposure to situations that may provoke distress. It also corresponded to a commitment to the well-being and safety of audience members who came to see the performances[30].

Research ethics approval (ethical clearance) was obtained from the Faculty of Arts, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Panel in August 2014. As part of the application, particular attention was given to the way risks would be managed with regards to exploring and performing moments of personal experience to an audience. A Research Information Sheet and Consent Form were produced as part of the application for ethics approval[31]. In designing the information sheet and the consent form, I followed the model outlined by Groenewald (2004), which specifies:

- that the volunteers are participating in research,
- the purpose and aims of the research,
- the procedures and timescale of the research,
- the risks and benefits of the research,
- the participant's right to withdraw from the research at any time,
- the procedures in place to protect confidentiality.

The Research Information Sheet and the Consent Form were handed to the participants/volunteers at the pre-project interview stage. They were discussed as part of the interview, and clarification was given if any of the participants had any questions. All of the ten participants in the research were happy to sign and give their informed consent. A copy of the consent form and information sheet was given to each participant for their own records.

The initial pre-project interview was framed as an opportunity to openly discuss issues of exposure and vulnerability as two key possible effects of the disclosure of lived experience through performance (Emunah, 1994). The boundaries of the project were clearly set by

[29] And practicing in accordance with the standards of ethical and professional practice of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2016) and the British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth, 2005)
[30] As it will be explained in subsection 3.3.5. below, the performances devised by the research participants were opened to an external audience at two different moments of the research
[31] See Appendices 1 and 2

making the participants aware of the research primary aims, the structure of the performance workshop design[32], and the research time frame. It felt important to reiterate at this stage that the aims of the research were not to offer a space whereby participants would be able to work through or resolve personal concerns or issues. This was not the primary intention of the performance workshop. Participants/volunteers remained free to choose whatever aspects or moments of their personal experience they were interested to explore and reflect on, but under the proviso that it felt safe enough for them to do so. Safe practice was therefore ensured by defining parameters that would contain unrealistic expectations and prevent potential re-traumatisation through the re-enactment of distressing and unresolved experiences.

The participants/volunteers were made aware of the confidentiality of the information shared throughout the research, the fact that their identity would remain protected, and that they would be anonymised in the write up and dissemination of the research. Yet, it was also made explicit from the beginning that participants would be expected to devise a number of performances that would be open to the public. Signing the consent form meant that they understood and agreed to the implications of presenting aspects of their personal experience in a public arena.

Clearly not everything in research can be anticipated and there remain elements and moments of unpredictability and uncertainty that unfold as the research progresses. This is particularly true when exploring and performing aspects of oneself that can unravel unexpected layers of experience, meaning and emotions. But this is also true as a result of being the witness of lived experiences performed by others. One does not know what that particular experience will be about, and how it will be performed. Equally, one cannot fully prepare for the experience of being a spectator exposed to potentially moving, fulfilling or distressing stories. With this in mind, each session of the performance workshop concluded with a 15-minutes debrief, to give the volunteers/participants a space to verbally share and reflect on what might have arisen in the course of the sessions. This format enabled participants to remain aware of each other's individual process. It also helped me, as facilitator, to "keep track" of everyone's emotional response and to offer the most appropriate form of support. As already mentioned, the research participants were encouraged to share with the group the

[32] Detailed in subsection 3.3.5. below

potential difficulties that they might encounter. They were also given the option to discuss these individually with myself, should it feel too exposing to do it alongside others. In addition, participants were made aware of external services that remained accessible if necessary. This included the university Counselling and Wellbeing Service, local voluntary organisations such as Mind, and a number of mental health helplines.

With regards to the external audience who came to see the performances[33], the following structures and procedures were put into place as ways of preparing audience members for the performances, and of providing opportunities for sharing afterwards:

- a programme was produced for the two performances open to the public (one of them open to families and friends, the other one open to the larger public). This programme provided details about the remit of the research and the process leading to the creation of the different performances,
- a flyer was produced to advertise the third and last set of performances to the larger public. It provided an outline of the evening,
- a verbal welcome by myself before the start of the performances, and a brief explanation of the process leading to their creation,
- two post-performance discussions introduced and facilitated by myself, and aimed at collecting the responses of the audience in reaction to the different autobiographical performances.

3.3.4. Methods of data collection

The following research methods were selected with the view of collecting data from a variety of sources, and of tracing the experiences of the research participants at different moments of the research:

1. Pre-project individual semi-structured interviews (13 in total)
2. Post-project individual semi-structured interviews (7 in total)
3. Individual performances throughout the project (21 in total: 3 different performances for

[33] See subsection 3.3.5. below for a description of when this happened in the research

each participant)
4. Focus groups (3 focus groups in total)
5. Debrief at the end of each group session (12 recordings in total)
6. Individual thought diary kept by each participant
7. Researcher's process diary
8. Post-performance discussions with audience after the second and third public performance
9. Post-performance audience questionnaire at the end of the third and final public performance
10. Online noticeboard through the web based platform Lino (www.linoit.com). Participants were invited to join an online noticeboard to share ideas, thoughts and feelings throughout the research performance workshop as a way of keeping in contact between sessions. Access to the noticeboard was strictly restricted to those taking part in the research and not granted to any third parties. Access to the noticeboard required the use of a password.

Pre- and post-project individual interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. Focus groups and debrief sessions were audio and video recorded and subsequently transcribed. Performances and post-performance discussions were video recorded. The post-performance discussions were also transcribed.

With regards to data storage, audio and video recordings were safely stored on personal computer and memory sticks that were encrypted with passwords only known to myself. Transcripts of interviews and focus groups were stored in a locked filling cabinet.

3.3.5. Performance workshop design

The performance workshop design describes the way in which the 20 weeks were structured around three different sets of autobiographical performances that were articulated around three distinctive questions.

I created the design to help meet the aims of the research, and to particularly explore how the production and witnessing of autobiographical performances inform the lived experience of those watching and performing. It was envisaged as a dialogic design (Norris and Sawyer, 2012) whereby the devising process would reflect the way in which the research participants

connected with the autobiographical performances of others within the group, and whereby they would alternate between the positions of performer and witness. It was also informed by some of the findings of the literature review, most notably the methodological design of 'generative autobiography' developed by Alexander (2000)[34].

The design was based on the creation of two small working groups within the whole research group. These two groups worked separately on the devising of a number autobiographical performances (group A and group B). Participants were allocated randomly to one of the two groups and remained in these throughout the study[35]. Despite this format, each session started with the group working as a whole and closed in the same fashion. The performance workshop was divided into three different stages, as outlined in Figure 2.

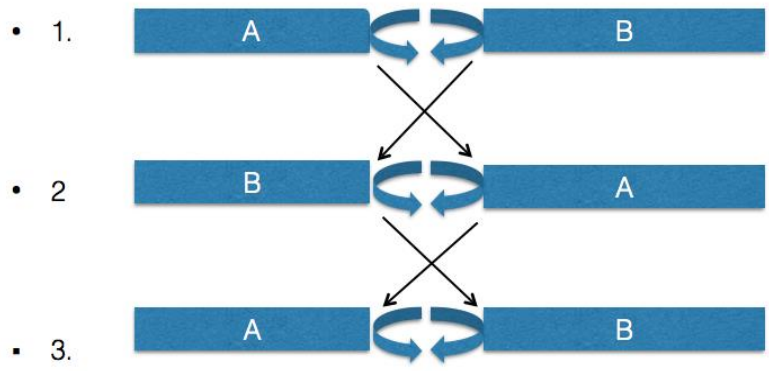


FIGURE 2: Performance workshop design

Stage 1:

Stage 1 was framed around the following question introduced in week 1: 'What aspect of your personal life, past or present, do you feel safe enough to explore and represent through a theatrical performance?'

Stage 1 ended with the first set of performances (a total of 7). Each participant in group A performed their individual autobiographical piece to group B. Then group B did the same. No external audience was invited at that stage as it had been decided by the group.

[34] See subsection 2.3.5. in Chapter 2
[35] See section 4.3. in Chapter 4 for an account of how the two groups were constituted

Stage 2:

Stage 2 was framed around the following question introduced in week 8: 'Which of the performances that you witnessed in the first stage have you found a resonance with? In what way does that performance connect with an aspect of your own experience that you are prepared to explore through a new performance?'

The intention in stage 2 was not for the participants to offer an interpretation, or critical or aesthetic judgments on the performances that they witnessed. The invitation was to connect through personal resonance with a moment of personal experience that would then be translated into a new performance.

Stage 2 ended with a public performance for an invited audience made up of friends and families, as decided by the research group. As in stage 1, participants alternated between the position of performer and spectator.

Stage 3:

Stage 3 was framed around the following question introduced in week 14: 'Based on the different positions that you have adopted so far as performer and spectator of others' performances, how would you revisit your initial performance? What has it become now? Has it changed in anyway? Is it leading into something else that you might like to represent through performance? What part of your own experience are you now connecting with? What do you need to do or devise to make your personal process complete?'

Stage 3 culminated with a third and last set of performances that were open to the larger public.

3.4. Overall strategy of data analysis

The overall strategy of data analysis reflects the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of the research. The epistemological framework outlined in the previous chapter suggested how meaning and knowledge results from particular intersubjective relationships within the context of autobiographical performance. My intention was to apply this theoretical perspective to the analysis of the data to reveal how the meaning of the research emerges from the relations and interactions between different sets of collected data. In that sense, the overall strategy for the analysis of the data can be compared to a gearing system, whereby the different wheels are activated through the movement initiated by other wheels, and whereby the created force is the result of the interactions between wheels.

The strategy of analysis consists of six different phases:

Phase 1:

The first phase of the analysis consists in a relational-phenomenological analysis of the data collected in the seven post-project individual interviews and the three focus groups. This is done with the specific intention of identifying criteria that will form the basis for the analysis of the autobiographical performances produced in the performance workshop.

Phase 2:

The second phase of the analysis consists in a creative analysis of the audio-video recordings of the different autobiographical performances based on the criteria identified in phase 1. This second phase analyses the performances by directly locating them in the experience of the research participants.

Phase 3:

The third phase of the analysis consists in analysing the responses of the external audience in reaction to the autobiographical performances, and how they informed the experience of the research participants. These responses were conveyed through the post-performance

discussions with the audience, and the audience questionnaire. This phase also considers the content of the debrief sessions, the online noticeboard, and the participants' research diaries.

Phase 4:

The fourth phase of the analysis consists in a creative reflection on my different positions within the study as researcher, dramatherapist and theatre practitioner. This phase provides a critical discussion of the impact of my different roles on the research as a whole and on its outcomes.

Phase 5:

The fifth phase of the analysis consists in putting in relation to one another the preliminary findings that emerged from the previous four phases (Norris and Sawyer, 2012). This is achieved through an original model of method of data analysis that juxtaposes preliminary findings with the view of cross-examining them and identifying the research's final findings. The particular relational model of data analysis is described in Chapter 5[36].

Phase 6:

The last phase of the analysis consists in feedback from the research participants on all of the previous five phases, including the discussion of the research findings. This is done with the specific intention of seeking validation of the outcomes and trustworthiness of the research, but also of enabling the research participants to contribute to the meaning of the research in a way that remains congruent with the theoretical premises of the study.

3.5. Evaluation, rigour and trustworthiness

Several authors in the field of qualitative research have argued that the traditional and recognised evaluation criteria of generalizability, validity and reliability are incompatible and not fit for purpose in the context of qualitative research (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Ward

[36] See section 5.2.

Schofield, 2002). They argue that, as a paradigm and philosophical tradition, qualitative research does not make claims for universal truth, but is rather interested in providing an in-depth description of the nature of human experience around a particular phenomenon in a specific area of study. As Johnson (1997, p.191) observes, 'it has been widely held that qualitative research is inherently ungeneralizable or that the term generalizability is not appropriately applied to qualitative methods'. Ward Schofield (2002, p.173) also comments that, 'it is clear that numerous characteristics that typify the qualitative approach are not consistent with achieving external validity as it has generally been conceptualized'. Butler-Kisber (2013, p.13) states boldly that 'questions of reliability have no relevance in qualitative inquiry'. In the particular context of arts-based research, Sajnani writes that:

> 'Positivist concepts of reliability and validity, which are characteristic of quantitative research, are not suited to the evaluation of arts based practice as research. Like qualitative science, arts based practice as research is not about arriving at a singular truth. Aesthetic forms of inquiry are intended to reveal complexity, embrace dimensionality, promote dialogue and collaboration, and catalyze further inquiry' (Sajnani, 2015, p.108).

Lewis et al. contest that the findings in qualitative research cannot be generalized and offer a more dispassionate view that suggests that the issue of generalization is 'strongly influenced by the epistemological and ontological orientations of the contributors' (Lewis et al., 2014, p.348). Leavy shares similar views and writes that 'issues of authenticity and validity are linked to the research purpose in a given project, as well as to the researcher's theoretical framework' (Leavy, 2009, p.155). The question remains as to how to effectively evaluate a qualitative study in the light of its aims and epistemological framework. As Greenwood (2012, p.13) puts it,

> 'given that qualitative data gathering and analysis, in particular, might be significantly subjective, what measures could the researcher use to ensure an acceptable degree of validity?'

I found particularly useful the way in which Butler-Kisber (2010) argues about trustworthiness and credibility as evaluation benchmark for qualitative studies. As she writes,

> 'trustworthiness is determined by its degree of persuasiveness, authenticity, and plausibility. A rigorous or trustworthy study indicates its persuasiveness by including a coherent and transparent research process and illustrating an adherence to researcher reflexivity and reflection, or a clear statement of how the researcher accounts for assumptions and biaises' (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.14).

In the light of this observation, I suggest four criteria of evaluation to determine the trustworthiness of this study in the context of the epistemological and methodological framework:

1. Contrasting the data: this reflects how a multi-method design 'implies rich opportunities for cross-validating and cross-fertilizing research procedures, findings, and theories' (Brewer, 2006, p.1). The incorporation of different methodological approaches enables an emphasis on convergence and divergence between findings. It also helps demonstrate how a plural methodological approach consolidates the findings (Jones, 2012b). It is achieved through triangulation that Creswell defines as the 'use of multiple and different sources, methods and theories to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of a study' (Creswell, 2013, p.302).

2. Transparency: this requires the demonstration of high standards of integrity throughout the research process, honesty, openness and critical consideration of pitfalls and flaws. Butler-Kisber (2010, p.21) argues that transparency is 'a way to enhance trustworthiness' and links it to the ethical and relational foundations of the research.

3. Participant validation: this refers to an involvement of the participants in the findings of the research as a way of supporting collaborative scrutiny of the analysis. As Holloway (1997, p.101) writes, 'member checks can enhance the trustworthiness of the findings'. It reflects an extension of the relational foundations of this study to the research process itself. It illustrates what Moustakas calls intersubjective validity 'to verify, accentuate, and extend knowledge and experience' (Moustakas, 1994, p.57).

4. Researcher's reflexivity: this refers to the ability of the researcher to reflect on 'the influence of their beliefs and behaviours on the research process' (Ritchie et al., 2014, p.23). Holloway closely links reflexivity to the monitoring process and suggests that it includes the researcher's 'reaction to the people and events in the setting' (Holloway, 1997, p.136). It also encompasses a critical examination of the different roles played by the researcher, and the implications of an active involvement in the creation and design of the research.

3.6. Summary of the methodological framework

This research adopts a multi-method design that combines performance as research and relational phenomenological inquiry. This design reflects the epistemological framework of the study by focusing on relational, intersubjective and embodied processes. The different modes of knowing derived from both methodological approaches have provided a rationale for the choice of the overall methodological framework of the study. Both approaches have also been located within the fields of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies research, whereby they firmly reflect the way in which performance and phenomenology are envisaged as particular and complementary modes of inquiry.

The methodological framework of this study weaves together diverse and convergent methods 'grounded in different ways of observing social reality' (Brewer, 2006, p.15). The overall strategy of analysis aims at providing a comprehensive and robust framework to 'secure an in-depth understanding' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.5) and analysis of the object of investigation in this study. As in a contrapuntal composition, the strategy of analysis reflects various musical lines which, in dialogue with one another, provide a particular polyphony to approach the research questions.

The following chapter provides an analysis of the different sets of data collected in the research and follows the first four phases of the strategy of analysis.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Structure of chapter:

4.1. Outline

This chapter constitutes the first part in the analysis of the research data. It reflects the first four stages of the strategy of data analysis outlined in the previous chapter[37]. It identifies preliminary findings emerging from an analysis of the different strands of data collected throughout the research. The analysis will be completed and refined in the following chapter that will address the remaining two stages of the strategy of data analysis.

This chapter first provides an analysis of the data from the post-project individual interviews and the three focus groups. The data are thematically analysed within a relational-centred phenomenological framework. As described in the previous chapter, the themes emerging from the analysis of the interviews and focus groups are used as foundations for the analysis of the different autobiographical performances devised by the research participants. The analysis of the performances is articulated around a particular creative method of data analysis, and is presented as a film that constitutes one of the creative outputs of the research[38].

The analysis then focuses on the data collected from the two post-performance discussions and the audience questionnaire. It mainly examines the responses of the audience members in reaction to the performances of the research participants. The content of the debrief sessions, the participants' individual diaries, and the online noticeboard are described as secondary data, because they either did not produce significant and relevant information or were not used consistently across research participants. The term 'secondary data' differs from the way in which they are generally considered in qualitative research, as 'preexisting data that have

[37] See section 3.4.
[38] Available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo

been collected for a different purpose or by someone other than the researcher' (McGinn, 2012, p.804). They will mainly be referred to as a way of supporting the preliminary findings.

The final part of the analysis in this chapter introduces a reflection on my different roles within the research, and their impact on the research process and its outcomes. The content of this reflection is presented as a short play that constitutes the second creative output of the research[39].

4.2. Individual pre-project interviews and research participants' profiles

I start by providing a more detailed description of the profile of the research participants based on the information collected in the pre-project semi-structured individual interviews[40]. The content of these interviews was not subject to any specific analysis. They have been summarised to highlight relevant background information about the research participants. I focus on the seven participants who completed the project, but also include the three participants who dropped out in the very early stage of the research. Each participant is referred to by a pseudonym in accordance with the protection of individual identity outlined in the ethical framework of the research.

From this point, and as a convention for this chapter, all quotations from research participants will be in italic between double quotation marks. All the words quoted from the research participants have been transcribed exactly as they were expressed.

4.2.1. Profile of the participants who completed the research project

Participant 1: Natalia

Natalia is a female of Turkish origin. She is PhD research student in the Music and Performing Arts Department[41] at Anglia Ruskin University.

[39] Available at https://vimeo.com/223889720
[40] See Appendix 3: Pre-project semi-structured interviews questions
[41] Known as School of Performance since September 2018

In the pre-project interview, Natalia explained that she joined the research project as a way of thinking about her own doctoral research, but also with the view of developing a creative idea that first emerged after attending an autobiographical performance module at university. Natalia entered this project with a desire to communicate that core idea but without knowing how to represent or shape it theatrically. She described that idea as "*wanting to be born*".

Natalia shared in the pre-project interview that she was in therapy but did not enjoy it as she was weary of making use of words. She envisaged that this research project would offer her an opportunity to engage in a process whereby she could communicate differently than through verbal language.

Natalia explained that she was anxious about working with a group of people that she didn't know and being told what to do. She also described a general ambivalence about the prospect of performing. She said that she used to be a performer but now finds it "*dull*". On the other hand, she explained that the core idea she was hoping to explore could "*only be born in performance*".

Participant 2: Louise

Louise is a female of British origin. She is an undergraduate student in Drama at Anglia Ruskin University.

In the pre-project interview, Louise explained that she volunteered for the research as a way of finding out about dramatherapy, but also as a rare opportunity to engage in a relatively long-term project based on exploration of personal experience. She did not enter the project with any clear idea of what that exploration could be about.

Louise recognised that she was nervous about working with a new group and described herself as being quite shy and reserved as a person. Louise is a close friend of participant 7, Henry. They joined the research project together.

Participant 3: Sophie

Sophie is a female of British origin. She is a graduate in Dramatherapy from Anglia Ruskin University.

In the pre-project interview, Sophie explained that she was interested in continuing an exploration of herself through performance, having previously undertaken an autobiographical module as part of her MA in Dramatherapy. Sophie was particularly interested in seeing how others' perception of herself may vary from her own perception. She also wondered whether a specific event that appeared to have had a particular significance in her life would still be the focal point of her autobiographical work.

I knew Sophie as a dramatherapy student when I taught on the autobiographical performance module on the MA in Dramatherapy at Anglia Ruskin University. I was also her clinical placement manager in her second year of study. In the pre-project interview, Sophie recognised that by joining the research project she was also hoping to learn new skills in group facilitation by "*observing*" me as the facilitator.

Participant 4: Nathan

Nathan is a male of British origin. He found out about the research through a friend (participant 10, Fiona) who also volunteered for the project but then dropped out in the first two weeks.

In the pre-project interview, Nathan explained that he had a previous opportunity to join an autobiographical performance project but decided against it because, as he explained, "*at that point I somehow thought it more important to be making work about issues and bigger politics than just about me*". Nathan appeared particularly attracted by the structure and the format of the research that he considered safe and supportive.

Nathan expressed concerns and worries in the interview about a general difficulty to see things through, because of the stress that some situations might produce. Nathan explained that he was hoping for the project to be a time when he could "*be creative with other people*". He shared that he was already thinking of what would happen after the project. This

translated a desire to be connected to a group of people with whom he could develop creative ideas through performance.

Nathan entered the project without having given any thought to what he might like to explore in his autobiographical work.

Participant 5: Karen

Karen is a female of British origin. She is also a graduate in Dramatherapy from Anglia Ruskin University. She did not study in the same year as Sophie but they both knew each other from previous contacts. I also knew Karen from teaching parts of the autobiographical performance module on the MA in Dramatherapy.

In the pre-project interview, Karen explained that the project gave her an opportunity to continue exploring autobiographical work, to develop her performance practice, and to gain further knowledge of working collaboratively with others in the context of her own dramatherapy practice. Karen explained that her previous experience gave her an appreciation of how "*theatrical means*" help communicate safely very personal material. She mainly referred to the distance that the use of metaphors and symbols can provide and how that distance particularly helped her to explore issues around her dyslexia.

Karen did not have any clear idea of what aspect of herself she might like to develop through performance. She remained open to what the "*collaborative work*" would bring for her.

Participant 6: Jenny

Jenny is a female of Taiwanese origin. She is a postgraduate student on the MA in Dramatherapy at Anglia Ruskin University. She is in her second year of study.

Jenny explained that she volunteered for the research because of an interest in exploring herself through performance, and an interest in the role and meaning of the witness in dramatherapy. She shared that she used to be an actress in Taiwan but quitted that role for a reason that remains puzzling to her. She started to understand the reasons through a previous

autobiographical performance as part of her training and how she found that some feedback on her performance validated her experience.

Jenny identified a personal conflict as a performer between wanting to be watched and the anxiety of being watched, and of not being "*perfect*". She was anxious that this conflict might be played out in the group, especially in relation to an external audience.

Participant 7: Henry

Henry is a male of British origin. He is an undergraduate student in Drama at Anglia Ruskin University. Henry is a close friend of participant 2, Louise. They are both in the same year of study.

In the pre-project interview, Henry expressed enthusiasm about the novelty of the project as a totally new experience that could inform his own performance practice, and a general interest in dramatherapy.

Henry explained in the interview that he found the research design interesting. He did not seem to have any particular idea about the kind of personal material he wanted to explore. Henry made me aware of physical limitations due to a lifelong health condition but he did not think that this would have any impact on his participation in the project.

4.2.2. Profile of the participants who did not complete the research project

Participant 8: Jane

Jane is a female of British origin. She is PhD research student in the Music and Performing Arts Department[42] at Anglia Ruskin University, where she also teaches.

Jane explained in the pre-project individual interview that she was interested in the combination of autobiographical performance and dramatherapy. She found it very

[42] Known as School of Performance since September 2018

"*rewarding*" to be given an opportunity to take part in research as a participant. She shared that she would be interested to explore issues of personal identity and social status through performance.

She dropped out after having only taken part in the first group session. She explained in an e-mail that she did not realise that some of her drama students also volunteered for the research. She described a boundary issue that she felt important to maintain.

Participant 9: Tania

Tania is a female of Irish origin. She is an undergraduate student in Drama at Anglia Ruskin University.

Tania explained in the pre-project interview that she decided to join the research because of an interest in dramatherapy, but also because she never had an opportunity to explore autobiographical performance. She described how she felt "*compelled*" to volunteer and how she looked forward to working alongside other people, learning from them by watching their performed stories.

Tania took part in two group sessions. She dropped out of the project because of family issues.

Participant 10: Fiona

Fiona is a female of British origin. She is an undergraduate student in Drama at Anglia Ruskin University. Fiona is a friend of Nathan, participant 4.

Fiona explained in the pre-project interview that she applied for the research because of her interest in autobiographical performance, as she was herself researching it as a way of "*breaking down barriers to do with mental illness*" based on her own experience of depression. She described herself as "*pretty much balanced at the moment*".

Fiona only took part in the first group session. She dropped out of the project for health reasons.

4.3. The research group and allocation to two working groups

As described in the previous chapter, participants were randomly allocated to two small groups. This happened at the end of the very first group session. At that time, there were ten participants in the group. Participants simply drew a number from a hat. The two groups were constituted as follows. I have purposefully left out the three participants who dropped out in the first two weeks of the research as their short participation did not generate significant data.

Group 1: Sophie, Jenny and Henry	Group 2: Natalia, Louise, Karen and Nathan

4.4. Individual post-project interviews

A total of seven semi-structured individual interviews were carried out with the participants who completed the research project[43]. These were held in the weeks following the end of the 20 weeks performance workshop and gave each participant an opportunity to reflect on their experience of the research. The intention was to understand the participants' individual experience of performing and witnessing a number of autobiographical performances, and how it informed their individual meaning making process. The intention was also to discuss and understand the progression between the participants' different performances, and the factors contributing to that progression. Finally, the intention was to reflect on the effect of the interactions with others within the research group on the experience of the research participants.

[43] See Appendix 4: Post-project semi-structured interviews questions

4.4.1. Relational-centred phenomenological analysis of the data

The data of the post-project individual interviews are the object of a relational-centred phenomenological analysis. Finlay and Evans (2009) outlined four general types of data analysis within a phenomenological relational framework, one of them being thematic analysis. In what follows, I adopt a particular protocol of thematic analysis to identify overarching themes between interviews.

4.4.2. Protocol for thematic analysis

For the purpose of this study, I follow the protocol and stages developed by Hycner (1985) for a thematic analysis of interview data within a phenomenological framework. I have chosen this protocol for providing a systematic step-by-step approach to data analysis, and for integrating textural and structural descriptions. I have adapted this protocol to meet the needs of the research and to integrate elements of a relational-centred phenomenological analysis (Finlay and Evans, 2009). The protocol is made of ten stages:

1. transcription,
2. bracketing and the phenomenological reduction,
3. listening to the interview for a sense of the whole,
4. delineating units of general meaning relevant to the research questions,
5. clustering units of relevant meaning,
6. determining themes from clusters of relevant meaning,
7. writing a summary for each individual interview,
8. identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews,
9. contextualisation of themes and writing a composite summary of findings,
10. synthesis of findings.

These ten stages can be described as follows:

1. all post-project individual interviews were transcribed, giving as much attention as possible to ‘non-verbal and para-linguistic communications’ (Hycner, 1985, p.280).

2. bracketing and the phenomenological reduction are essential aspects of the phenomenological method, as discussed in the methodology chapter. In the language of relational-centred phenomenological analysis, bracketing refers to the embodied presence of the researcher 'aiming to be open, empathic, self-aware, authentic and intuitive of the other' (Finlay and Evans, 2009, p.69).

3. listening to the interviews for a sense of the whole is similar to a process of zooming out to gain a first general understanding of the structure of the interview data. It involves repeated listening to the recordings and reading of the transcripts. This stage consists in 'dwelling with data' (Finlay, 2012, p.186) to slowly reveal a first glimpse of meaning.

4. delineating units of general meaning relevant to the research questions refers to the identification of 'those words, phrases, non-verbal or para-linguistic communications which express a unique and coherent meaning' (Hycner, 1985, p.282). This stage constitutes a sensitive first selection process that reflects a critical engagement with the essence of the data and remains faithful to the wording of the participants.

5. clustering units of relevant meaning looks at ways in which the units of data 'naturally cluster together' (ibid., p.287) for their particular content. The process consists in drawing commonalities between units of meaning and critically identifying themes that unite them.

6. determining themes from clusters of relevant meaning reflects a process of further refinement and distillation of interview data, consisting in identifying 'central themes which express the essence of the clusters' (ibid., p.290). Tables of 'themes from clusters of relevant meaning' have been created for each participant and are presented in Appendices 5 to 11.

7. writing a summary for each individual interview: this stage consists in incorporating the central themes that have been extracted from the data. As Hycner writes, 'this summary gives a sense of the whole as well as providing the context for the emergence of the themes' (Hycner, 1985, p.291). At this stage of the analysis, the aim is 'to describe rather than explain' (Finlay, 2009b, p.10) in order to remain as close as possible to the experience as lived. These individual summaries have been attached in Appendices 12 to 18 following the tables of "themes from clusters of relevant meaning".

8. identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews consists in looking for common themes across the different interviews and for 'individual variations' (Hycner, 1985, p.292). Table 1 in the following section provides a summary of these overarching and unique themes across research participants.

9. contextualisation of themes and writing a composite summary of findings: this stage provides a summary of the experience of all the research participants structured around the themes previously identified, but also reflecting 'significant individual differences' (ibid., p.294). This composite summary integrates a textural and structural analysis of the data (Creswell, 2013).

10. The synthesis of findings constitutes the last stage of the analysis. It provides a summary of preliminary findings for each of the thematic categories emerging from the individual post-project interviews, and a first link to the research questions.

4.4.3. Composite summary of findings for the individual post-project interviews

Table 1 below summarises the general and unique themes that emerged from the analysis of the post-project individual interviews. It also includes my position as the researcher (R) who structured the interviews around specific questions relevant to the research aims and research questions.

Table 1. *General and unique themes across research participants, including the researcher*

	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	R
Witnessing	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Being witnessed	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Being witnessed by the other participants			V		V			

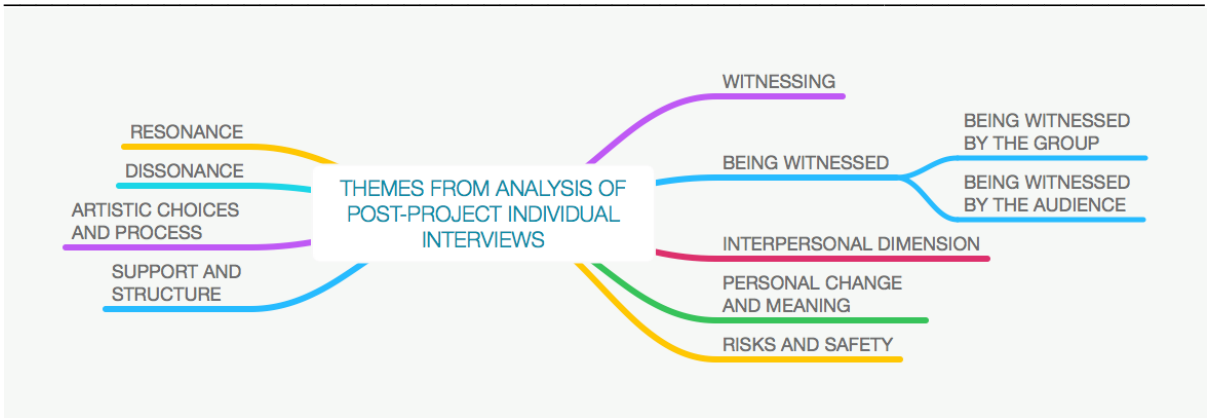
Being witnessed by the audience			V		V			
Resonance	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Dissonance	V		V		V		V	V
Interpersonal dimension	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Elements of surprise	V	V		V	V	V	V	
Personal change and meaning	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Creative language and distance	V							
Risks and safety		V			V	V	V	
Artistic choices and process			V		V	V	V	V
Achievements				V				
Hopes				V				
Difficulties		V		V				
Meaningful moments	V		V		V	V		V
Support and structure	V	V	V		V		V	

P = participant
R = researcher

Given the large number of themes and for the purpose of clarity, only the general themes shared in at least four interviews are selected. The remaining themes are grouped within the other categories. This leaves a total of nine themes and two sub-themes as summarised in Table 2. The themes of ‘elements of surprise’ and ‘meaningful moments’ are grouped under

the theme of 'personal change and meaning'. The theme of 'creative language and distance' is grouped with the theme of 'artistic choices and process'. The theme of 'difficulties' is divided between the themes of 'dissonance' and 'interpersonal dimension'.

Table 2. *Themes emerging from the thematic analysis of the post-project individual interviews*



Theme 1: Witnessing

As previously mentioned, one of the aims of the individual post-project interviews was to understand how the participants' experience of witnessing autobiographical performances devised in the context of the research, informed the individual meaning making process. As a researcher, I was very much aware that the theme of 'witnessing' emerged from the way in which I asked the question in the first place, and the way in which the interviews were constructed.

Most participants described similar experiences in which witnessing enabled them to access concealed parts of themselves, to feel inspired, to go deeper into themselves, and to be more open. Witnessing appeared to have a profound impact on how participants negotiated their creative autobiographical journeys throughout the workshop.

Natalia (P1) described how witnessing other performances encouraged her to create a "*non-traditional performance*" that strikingly contrasted with how she devised her first one. She explained how, as a witness, she faced a number of performances whereby the performers

chose much more direct ways of conveying the nature of an autobiographical moment. She was plunged into their personal world and made to directly experience that particular world. She found these performances "*raw*", "*honest*" and "*open*", and was taken aback by what they so powerfully conveyed. For Natalia, it was not so much about what these performances were about than how they were performed. They provided her with an opportunity to connect with and access a different part of her own creativity. As she explained:

> "*If I hadn't watched and enjoyed those I certainly would not have been able to access my own creativity in areas that I hadn't worked in before*".

Louise (P2) described a similar process whereby witnessing the performances of others opened new possibilities and encouraged a different attitude, and how "*seeing*" people "*sharing quite personal stuff*" helped her to become "*a lot more open and less secretive*". For Louise, witnessing became an incentive that gradually enabled her to disclose more, and to be comfortable with it.

Sophie (P3) related a similar experience, explaining how the witnessing of other performances gave her the "*permission*" and the "*inspiration*" to do what she wouldn't normally do. Seeing others enabled her "*to release the safety catch*", and to enter territories that were not necessarily uncharted but certainly uncultivated. As she explained:

> "*After witnessing other people when they had used the voice and shouted and screamed it was almost like I had permission to do it myself, so I included that in the second one with the pre-recorded".*

Sophie reflected that she "*felt privileged to bear witness*" to other performances, as "*it produced inspiration to share a little bit more*", and revived aphonic parts of herself.

Karen (P5) described how witnessing other performances enabled her to go "*further*" and "*deeper*" with her own performances. She explained that:

> "*It made me want to do the same even more so. So that spurred me on to want to not necessarily do better, that's not the right word but because everybody had shown so much of themselves, I wanted to also be able to honour that by showing more of myself*".

Like Louise, Karen found in witnessing an incentive to explore a vulnerable and undisclosed part of herself. Through witnessing others, Karen found the key to a door that opened a new

perspective on her dyslexia. She was subsequently able to find a language to "*translate*" her experience of dyslexia, to make people see what it is like, and more importantly what it feels like. Karen particularly described how witnessing Jenny's (P6) first performance inspired her to explore and communicate the sensations and the physiological experience of her dyslexia in a way that words could not convey. As she explained:

> "*In rather than trying to explain to somebody though words, or on paper written, about how my dyslexia feels to me, I spent the time trying to think how it should translate into looking and feeling and sounding*".

Karen concluded that:

> "*I don't think without Jenny having evoked that in me, I don't think I would have done it*".

Karen reflected not solely on how she was influenced by what she witnessed, but also on how she was able to witness how other participants had been influenced by her own performances. She described how she recognised elements of her second performance in Henry's (P7) last performance. It reminded her of her *"own piece showing the dyslexia, the invisible thing*". As Karen described it:

> "*That's pretty amazing and special that somebody wants to incorporate even just one small element of your piece into theirs*".

As a result, Karen felt that it was "*like an honour to have that happened*". Karen described a similar response following witnessing Jenny's (P6) second performance which was "*evoked*" by her first one. Interestingly, Jenny also described how she identified with Karen's second performance which was devised in response to her first one. Jenny explained how witnessing Karen made her feel that Karen's performance was directly addressed to her. As Jenny explained:

> "*At that moment, I feel that performance is for me. I started to think that I feel it's very interesting that actually it's her story and is triggered by my story and becomes her story. It's kind of we connected to each other and at that moment, I still … when she performed at that moment, I'm thinking about this is my performance*".

Jenny explained how that sense of relatedness made her realise how personal stories are "*universal*" since they reflect, as she said, how "*everyone has same feelings*".

Sophie also described how witnessing Karen's second performance, which had been partly devised in response to her first one, made her feel validated and recognised. As she stated:

> "*I think it made me feel less isolated in my own personal experiences because someone else had recognized and witnessed something in mine*".

Henry (P7) described how witnessing other performances had gradually enabled him to "*break out of a cycle*", to become more open and willing to explore a very personal and vulnerable part of himself. Witnessing others had been one of the factors that helped him to make that transition, and to cross that "*bridge*".

Theme 2: Being witnessed

The theme of "being witnessed" also directly emerged from the way in which the interviews were structured. My intention was to understand how the experience of performing and being witnessed informed meaning. For clarity, I establish a distinction between how the research group was experienced as a witness and how the audience was experienced as a witness. This distinction results in two sub-themes.

Theme 2 sub-theme 1: Being witnessed by the group

Jenny described how "*being witnessed*" became for her more important that "*being the witness*". She noticed how she gradually felt more comfortable with being witnessed, how she overcame a feeling of intrusion of others watching her, and how significant the process of being seen became for her. She realised that if she wanted to "*find*" herself, she would need "*to let people to watch*" her. She described the role of the witnesses as: "*it looks like they help me to see myself*".

Jenny's view of being witnessed changed from being perceived as the critical judgement of an external eye, to becoming a helpful process enabling her to gain knowledge and meaning. This mainly happened through feedback and discussions with others, especially in her small group. She gave the example of Sophie who, despite being of a different cultural origin, explained to her that she could also have difficulties in communicating with others, and feeling misunderstood. For Jenny, being witnessed acted as a scaffolding when she didn't

always "*know how to organize these feelings*'. It also helped her to realise that she was not the only one to struggle with such issues. Besides, she felt understood by a person from a different cultural background. This had a significant impact in dissolving language and cultural barriers through a realisation of what she had in common with others. As she explained:

> "*I don't feel anyway like being a different culture anymore when they said that. The barrier is just gone*".

Sophie offered similar reflection by explaining how she was encouraged to do and try new things following "*feedback*" from those who witnessed her. Feedback within her small group helped her to become more "*playful*" with her autobiographical ideas, and more comfortable with aspects of herself that she could find difficult to own. This was something that Sophie also experienced as a result of being witnessed by an audience, as will be described below.

Sophie described how the process of being witnessed and witnessing fed into one another, and became very closely interlinked. She felt able to go deeper into herself as a result of the response from others, but equally felt that others were able to go deeper into themselves as a result of her own response as a witness. Sophie described how this felt like a "*break even relationship*", a "*dialogue*" between different personal experiences that deepened through "*sharing*". As she explained:

> "*You know, I talk and someone else would listen, and then someone else will talk back. And so it felt like I had shared something, and then they had shared something so then I could just share a little bit more*".

Nathan briefly described a different experience of being witnessed with singular consequences. He recalled how Henry in one of the debrief sessions reacted with some hostility to his performances by saying that he should "*try harder to do something a bit more*....". Nathan was unable to finish that sentence as if he was still unsure of what Henry really expected from him at the time. But Nathan was able to recognise this moment as having had significant bearing on the way he approached and devised his last performance.

Theme 2 sub-theme 2: Being witnessed by the audience

Jenny did not only reflect on the impact of being witnessed by others in the group, but also on how the audience was "*very important*" in her different performances. She appeared surprised that a British audience commented on how they had been "*touched*" by her performances. She explained how this helped her to realise that emotions were "*not so private*", but that emotions could be communicated and understood regardless of cultural and linguistic differences. This created for her a sense of internal validation and connection to others.

Jenny also described how the response of the audience helped her to recognise, name and structure her feelings, echoing what she had already described as a result of having been witnessed by others in the research group. Jenny explained how she generally creates stories from "*instinct*", without necessarily knowing what they are about. As she put it:

> "*I want to do something but sometimes I don't always know what that means*".

The audience provided a vocabulary that helped her to understand herself better, as if the audience was authoring the story by filling the gaps within it. Jenny reflected on how the audience in a post-performance discussion helped her, for instance, to identify a feeling of fear that she had produced through scenic means and the use of blindfolds, without totally realising the meaning of it.

Like Jenny, Sophie described how feedback from the audience "*provided some insight*" on aspects of her personality that she protects herself against. As she explained:

> "*It's not something I would normally admit to out loud because I tend to shield myself from those certain things, and so it was quite interesting hearing it. I was able to acknowledge that. That was very powerful for me*".

Receiving feedback from the witnessing audience completed her experience of performing and confirmed what she was attempting to communicate. As she explained:

> "*Some of the feedback that I received, I hadn't recognized myself. But then when I heard it, I was like 'yes!' that's absolutely right. (...) That's exactly what I was feeling, and wanted to portray, but I just didn't realize at the time. That was really interesting that other people's perceptions were exactly what I wanted to get across without realizing that was what I wanted to get across*".

Feedback from the audience provided clarity on what Sophie tried to convey, and how the audience's perceptions coincided with what she attempted to communicate without necessarily realising it. The circle reached completion as she was able to recognise in the audience's comments something that they recognised in her.

Sophie devised her performances wanting to "*open it up to the audience*", and to let them be the witness of her process. This was not without risks. Sophie was very much aware from the outset of how very easy it is "*for a voice to be misinterpreted*". Although the overall quality of the feedback from the audience was a positive reinforcement of her initial intention, Sophie also experienced the hostile words of an audience member who questioned the appropriateness of her singing in her last performance. She was initially upset but described how she was able not to let that voice tone down her experience:

> "*At first it was like, hang on, I don't like that feedback. And then I just thought actually, I don't care because I loved it, and other people seemed to have liked it*".

Karen also described how she was the subject of a critical written comment from an audience member who, after her third performance, questioned the way in which she devised her performance. This was a particularly difficult and "*tough*" moment for Karen as it "*brought back in*" some of the anxiety of making herself visible through performance. As she explained:

> "*Because then somebody was negative and I'm not quite at that place of being really, really, really positive yet. It just took more of a toll*".

Karen explained that she did not feel as "*bothered*" when we spoke about it, as she had given herself more time to think about it. Yet, this was a moment that partially shadowed her overall experience, made her question the rightness of her choices and what she decided to share.

Henry described how the audience influenced the way he devised his different performances, especially the last one. He explained how he invited a number of friends to come and watch the two public performances. He reflected on how he felt that in his last performance there was "*more expectation*" on him from the friends who saw his second performance:

> "*I wanted to give them something different which they hadn't seen before, because I didn't want to be really repetitive*".

Henry also noticed how he was influenced by having one of his lecturers coming to see the performances, which he described as "*really, really weird*". He appeared to be motivated by a desire to be seen for what he managed to achieve, and remembered thinking at the time:

> "*I'm actually really, really proud of my last performance and I want her to be here to watch it*".

Louise described how she found it "*comfortable*" to perform for an audience. Most of the audience was composed of friends who already knew her personally, and there was an element of familiarity that also applied to the performance venue. She described how she might have felt differently if there had been people who didn't know her that well.

Theme 3: Resonance

The theme of 'resonance' emerged from the way in which the individual interviews were structured and reflected my interest as a researcher to explore that issue in relation to the research questions. The concept of resonance was also directly used in the formulation of the question leading to the second stage of the research design, and to the devising of the second performances.

Natalia described how she devised her second performance based on a "*true connection*" with the first performances of Jenny, Nathan and Louise. As she explained:

> "*Maybe you need that connection to do something well. Well is the wrong word but to do something powerful and effective*".

She found Louise's performance particularly difficult to cope with because of her "*level of honesty*". Natalia devised a second performance with the view of enabling the audience to experience things much more directly. She gave herself permission to experience something that she hadn't come into contact with before, but that was a direct result of the way she connected with others' performances. As she said about Nathan's first performance:

> *"The thing that really did it for me was still the honesty*".

Natalia explained how these connections enabled her to go "*sideways*", to "*look around*", "*try new things*", and "*have great fun with it*". She subsequently devised a second performance that significantly belonged to a different order of experience based on affective, sensory and embodied engagement.

Louise described how Natalia's first performance resonated with her although, she said, she had "*no idea what it was about*". Natalia's performance retained an element of opacity and secrecy that appealed to her. But Louise also seemed to find in Natalia's performance a safe and unusual way of exploring personal and intimate material, offering a balance between protection and disclosure. Yet, she also described how she "*couldn't think of a way to incorporate*" it into her own performances.

Henry explained how he embraced the design of the workshop and based his second performance on a resonance with Louise's first performance. He described how he chose Louise's first performance because she showed a side of herself that he had never seen before, and how "*surprised*" he had been by her performance.

Henry's comment made me wonder about the impact of special relationships within the group between people who knew one another before joining the project. Henry was a friend of Louise and, as he explained, they often talked about the group between sessions. The resonance they each identified with the performance of the other could have been the expression of an acknowledgement of their respective efforts and desire not to offend one another.

Similarly, Karen identified with two performances that were devised by the other two dramatherapists, who also knew one another before joining the research. Karen explained how Sophie's first performance resonated with her because "*it was very positive and felt very uplifting*". But this connection appeared outweighed by the way in which Karen strongly identified with Jenny's first performance:

> "*Mine was influenced quite a lot by Jenny and her use of sound and also that disorientating feeling that she gave everybody with the blindfolds*".

Karen described a connection that not only resulted from seeing the performance, but more importantly from experiencing the performance with her physical self. Jenny's performance resonated within her like the sounding board of a musical instrument. The connection was primarily made through the body, as she was made to experience some of the physical sensations and feelings of her dyslexia.

Nathan described similar embodied connections with other performances. As he explained:

> "*I was more responding to the energy of people's performances than the specifics or any particular detail of what their life is like*"

Nathan described a particular connection with Sophie's first performance that was "*brimming over with enthusiasm*". He explained how he connected with the "*energy*" of Sophie's piece. Nathan's physical connection with Sophie's performance only occurred to him as we talked about it in the interview, and as I was suggesting a hypothesis about the nature of his connections to others.

Jenny also described how she found it difficult to verbalise the nature of her connections with other performances but was able to understand it better through the use of her body. As she explained, "*it just helped me to not keep thinking in my brain, just using my body*'.

Jenny described how she connected with Karen's first performance but lacked the ability to translate it into words. She explained how she found it much easier to explore the nature of that connection through sounds and movements, and how that exploration helped the devising of her second performance. Jenny described how an embodied language gave her the means to translate, understand and communicate her connections with the stories of others, and helped overcome the difficulty of "*finding the words*".

Theme 4: Dissonance

The theme of 'dissonance' was also an aspect of the participants' experience that I was interested to explore in the interviews. My intention was to consider possible moments of tension and disconnection that may have significantly hindered or impacted on the participants' individual process. The theme of 'dissonance' mainly describes how the

research participants experienced the performances of others in the group, rather than interpersonal tension that will be discussed in the next thematic category.

Henry most notably explained how he felt "*frustrated*" by a member of the group whom he remained very careful not to name. Henry described how he felt their performance "*was not personal on any level at all*", and how he did not "*learn anything*", despite a reasonable expectation given the remits of the workshop. This "*pushed*" him to do the opposite of what he perceived that person did, and to think:

> "*Do you know what? They're not doing anything personal. I want to do something really personal!*"

Henry's frustration acted as an impulse in response to the annoyance he felt towards another group member who, according to him, "*came in with an agenda*". As Henry explained:

> "*I just thought I want to show them what can be achieved through this*".

Henry recalled how the discussion with the audience after the second performance gave him "*the momentum*" to tell that group member that he "*did not think what they were doing was right*".

Natalia explained that she did not connect as much with the performances that she perceived as "*a bit superficial*" and not "*theatrical enough*". She mainly referred to Karen's and Henry's first performances that, in her words, she "*didn't care*" about. Natalia also reflected on how she experienced Louise's second performance which was based on her first performance. Natalia failed to recognise a link that was meaningful in any way. It wasn't that she disliked that performance but rather kept wondering what the connection was. Sophie described a similar reaction after watching Nathan's second performance. As Sophie explained:

> "*I was really disappointed because I didn't feel that there was a response to mine in it. I felt that his was a continuation of what he had previously done*".

Theme 5: Interpersonal dimension

The participants generally agreed on how their relationships to others within the research group, either within their small working group or the larger group, had a very significant impact on the way they developed throughout the project.

Natalia described how the group gave her enough containment and support to insufflate life into what she so desperately wanted to create in her first performance. She explained how the members of her small group became the "*midwives and nurses*" who she needed to ensure a safe delivery of her idea.

Jenny explained how she felt very supported and accepted by everyone in the group, and did not feel judged. This helped her to realise that there was no such a thing as "*a bad performance*", and to release some of her initial anxiety about producing something worth watching.

Louise described how the group became for her "*a bit of a community*", and how it significantly enabled her to gradually be more open and confident. A sense of togetherness helped her connect with aspects of herself that she normally protects herself against. She particularly recognised the positive influence of her small group and how she felt supported to explore her ideas. The group helped her to come out of herself and to take greater risks that were made explicit in her third performance.

Interestingly, Louise reflected on the impact of her relationship with Henry as a friend and fellow student on her undergraduate course. She also referred to two other research participants who dropped out in the very early stages of the research, Tania and Jane. Louise felt that the special relationship with Henry could have had a greater impact than it actually had. Louise expressed relief when she realised that Henry, as well as Tania and Jane, would not be part of her small group. She explained how being in the same group as Henry could have inhibited her even more. She described how she would "*have probably been a lot less open*" and how they could have ended up "*hiding behind each other*'.

Henry described how he felt "*everyone was really supportive*", and how he did "*not expect that to be so important*". It seemed unambiguous for him that he would not have been able to

devise his performances without the influence of the group, and the quality of the interactions within it. This helped to produce performances that gradually became more personal, and that reflected the way in which what he initially "*wanted to share*" at the very beginning had "*changed by the end of it*":

> "*Having an insight into their life made me want to give them a bit more of an insight into my life*".

Karen particularly noticed how "*comfortable*" she felt in the group, in a way that she had not anticipated. As she felt that "*there was no judgement*" in the group, this helped her to become more open, and to "*let people in*" in a way that would be illustrated in her performances. Karen established a distinction between her relationship to others within her small group and within the larger group. Karen explained how she sometimes felt "*uncomfortable*" within her small group because of "*some people*" who she was careful not to name. In contrast, she felt more comfortable in the large group where "*everybody was a lot more active and physical*". Karen noticed how she found herself being helpful to others in her small group, as opposed to being helped by others in the large group.

Nathan most notably valued the way in which the group had enabled him to experience something quite unique that he would not have been able to achieve otherwise: "*the idea of having a band of collaborators to make work with is just brilliant*". The group gave him an opportunity to "*be creative with*" others. Nathan described his experience in the group as a "*celebration of togetherness*". It was very difficult for him to come to terms with the fact that the group was "*over*", and to detach himself from that experience. He was left feeling adrift when the "*group work*" came to an end, repeatedly expressing how he wished it could "*carry on*", and how what he was really looking for was an "*ongoing collaborative performance workshop*". For Nathan, the research project appeared to meet a need for "*company*", and to respond to an intense yearning to create and work collaboratively with others.

Theme 6: Personal change and meaning

The theme of 'creation of meaning' is clearly central to this research. I made a conscious choice to structure a number of questions around that issue as I was interested to explore

what new insights the research participants gained as a result of their participation, as well as what might have contributed to this newly acquired knowledge.

Some of the participants were able to reflect on personal change, whereas some others found it much more difficult. Nathan, for instance, resisted the attempts I made to link his experience to new found meanings:

> "*I don't feel like I discovered anything about myself. I don't feel like there was a revelation, or if there was, it's all kind of practical stuff, like it's helpful to me to have a performance group, and I discovered that I like to dance, which I kind of knew already, but I hadn't really tried it out*".

Completing the project felt like a personal achievement as he sometimes "*struggled to hang in there*" due to tiredness and long term health issues. Nathan's involvement in the research did not seem to hold any meaning other than having met his initial expectations and aspirations. I couldn't help observing in the interview the sharp contrast between his first two performances and his last one, which was almost entirely non-verbal and based on movements. I was very curious about how Nathan felt about that and what it meant to him personally. My interest was met with a mixture of surprise and bewilderment as it did not seem to be something that Nathan particularly thought much about.

Furthermore, he described my attempts at trying to understand his experience as "*quite abstract*", and found it difficult to elaborate and verbalise any further. Yet, it appeared that the interview, although "*hard*" for Nathan, enabled him to envisage aspects of his experience that he might not have previously considered. As he put it,

> "*Wow, blimey! I'm going to be thinking about this for a while, I think*".

Natalia described her experience of the research project as a "*milestone*" in her development as a person and artist. The project responded to an internal desire to give life to an idea that she was carrying within herself, like a baby in gestation in the womb. She felt "*liberated*" as she managed, in her first performance, to give *"birth to it*". She delivered what was within her and the "*knot*" she felt inside became undone. Despite the high significance of her first performance, Natalia described her second performance as being the most meaningful and "*fulfilling*":

> "*The second one is significant because I did things I have never thought I was ever going to think of doing*".

Like Nathan, Natalia found it quite difficult to reflect on what had changed for her and what meaning emerged from her performances. She appeared to resist attempts to verbalise the nature of her experience as if putting things into words would somehow betray it, and "*take the magic away from the story*". Words appear to fall short of meaning as her experience belonged primarily to the domains of sensations and feelings.

Natalia observed that she would not have been able to discover what she did "*without the interaction with the group*":

> "*I don't know if it's the interaction that's creating the meaning but I think it's certainly the route to the meaning*".

Louise also appeared to find it quite difficult to reflect on new awareness gained as a result of her involvement in the research. For Louise, the research project resulted in one significant change:

> "*I think the main thing that changed through my own performances was, again, to do with the openness*".

Louise explained how meaning mainly emerged from dialogue and interactions with others following the performances:

> '*I felt like the meaning wasn't particularly created by the people performing. It was more created by our interpretations, and our discussion after it, and what we identified with*".

Sophie described a similar process when explaining how others, through feedback, completed her performances and actualised meaning. For Sophie, meaning was transient and "*evolving*" depending on the context in which the performance took place. Every new "*encounter*" reveals new insights and creates possibilities for new truths to emerge. As she explained:

> "*I think that the meaning changes with every performance that you do, and with every witness that sees it*".

She also observed how new meanings kept emerging as we were talking in the interview about her experience. She observed how we were creating and revealing new meanings in our dialogue:

> "*Even talking about it now I think the meaning has already changed, and I recognize new things. I guess I'm talking about it in a different way*".

Jenny discovered through her different performances that drama was not solely an art form to excel in as an actress, but also a powerful language and a way of communication capable of transcending cultural "*barriers*":

> "*Using the drama or the story, I feel more comfortable and it's just really natural to me more than using words. I never noticed that before*".

Equally, Jenny realised how her relationship to the audience had changed, and how the different witnesses helped her to unveil aspects of herself that she did not previously consider.

Karen described how her second performance was very meaningful to her, as she managed to portray very effectively her experience of dyslexia:

> "*My second performance was the most meaningful thing for me because it brought to life something that I had really struggled to describe previously or show others, and it helped me make meaning of my own self and understanding it better*".

In her second and third performance, she gradually "*let the audience in*". This represented a significant change that seemed to mark a transition from disconnection and isolation to connection with herself and others.

Henry explained how his last performance left a profound impression on him as he "*laid out*" different aspects of his ill-health on a whiteboard. This was a "*definitely more personal*" performance that helped him realise how his health had been "*quite rubbish at times*". He explained that it "*hit*" him "*a lot harder*" than he thought it would:

> "*It's made me realize that it is more serious than I was giving it credit for*".

His last performance resulted in tangible change as, following it, he decided to cut out alcohol completely knowing that drinking was detrimental. Henry did not describe this as a life changing event but rather as a confirmation of something he already knew.

Theme 7: Artistic choices and process

This thematic category refers to the way in which the research participants reflected on the progression between their different performances in form and content, and on the factors that they felt contributed to that progression. Again, this was an aspect of their experience that I was particularly interested to explore in order to gain a deeper understanding of the object of the study.

Henry described how his performances "*existed as a trio*". This description also seemed to apply to other participants whose different performances followed a natural progression, and formed a whole made of interrelated parts.

Henry produced performances that gradually became more personal and reflected a process in which what he "*wanted to share*" at the very beginning had "*changed by the end of it*". The progression became possible as a result of witnessing other performances, the interpersonal dynamics within his small group and the larger group, and the external audience coming to watch the performances.

Henry recognised that he "*didn't want to share that much*" in his first performance. He was more motivated by a desire to do things aesthetically "*differently*". He did not want to create a piece that would reflect what he imagined to be a traditional way of devising autobiographical work. As a result, he sang a song in front of a video projected in the background. In contrast, his two other performances remained "*essentially silent*".

Henry's second performance reflected an attempt to "*break out of a cycle*" and to go against what he might have initially contemplated at the beginning of the research. It was an attempt to be different but this time in a way that would open a path for a more personal exploration. As Henry explained, it was as much "*about joining a cycle*" as it was about breaking it. He

opened a new cycle that enabled him to face the lived reality of his health, and to explore a different and maybe more discounted part of himself.

Sophie described her three performances as being "*like the beginning, middle and end*". They were clearly connected and gradually provided the impetus for a climax in her third performance, where she made the most distinctive use of her own voice through singing. Sophie found in others the means to become "*more open*", more authentic, and to reclaim the power of her subdued voice. She described a sense of personal triumph as she overcame some of her fears, "*played to the audience*", and honoured a hidden but deeply satisfying part of herself:

> "*I felt like I was in control. Like I had done everything I had been afraid of. I had gone up and I sang on the stage, I had used my real voice. I felt like I was honouring myself when I just felt right I am ready. And so I just got rid of my fears, and that was almost like the confidence coming through, and then that was it that was the end*".

Louise also described how her three performances felt like a whole. As she observed, "*it just seemed like everything kind of fitted together and I've not realized it* ". Her last performance reflected very clearly a process of "*openness*" that was very significant to her. Louise described her first two performances as "*introductory*". They remained very "*contained*" and, as she explained, "*they were private but what it was about was kind of hidden*". In contrast, the openness that Louise described was epitomised in her last performance that was a culmination point in her process:

> "*The third one was like taking that top layer off and just going straight into this is actually what it is*".

Jenny's progression reflected a process whereby she felt understood and, at the same time, developed a better understanding of herself. Her cultural origin and her difficulty of understanding others from a different language background was a central theme in her first performance. This was mirrored by her own position within the research group whereby the majority of participants were native English speakers. Jenny realised how hard it was for her to live in a foreign and alien environment where she found it difficult to understand others. As she explained:

> "*There is a process. I start from I don't understand. I try so hard to understand. Maybe now I understand a little bit and then in the end, I say yeah, I understand but it's time to go home*".

Jenny observed that her process was not totally complete as she was considering creating a performance project in Taiwan that would "*combine*" the three autobiographical performances she devised in the research.

Nathan's performances also seemed to follow a particular thread in content, whilst being distinctively different in form. Throughout his performances, Nathan's concern for the environment remained constant but his way of talking about it noticeably changed. His final performance culminated in a communal act whereby others were invited to share with him a moment of common humanity in movement. Nathan explained how other performances gave him an impulse to explore things differently. He experienced them in a very embodied way and became "*attracted to the idea*" of using fewer words, and of privileging physicality and movement as effective forms of communication and engagement with himself and others.

Natalia's progression through her performances was different in the sense that she completed in her first performance what she was hoping to achieve when joining the research. As she explained:

> "*For me, the main idea that I wanted to work on was actualized in the first performance. For me, the whole process had really finished with the first performance*".

If the content of her performance actualised her initial desire, Natalia made use of the other performances to play and experiment with the form. Her second performance made her "*look around*". She found in other performances a permission to "*try out ways of working and ways of performing*" that she had not previously considered for herself, and that opened up significant new possibilities.

This enabled Natalia, in her final performance, to retell the story of her first performance but markedly differently. Her third performance was a way for her to "*connect everything together and fill the gaps*". She reflected that, in contrast to her first performance, she did not make others act her story. She was simply herself telling a story that was also her story. She was able to own the child that was born and to claim it as, "*this is my child*". As she put it:

> "*The third one of course that was the point that I was owning up my story. It did mean something, yeah by all means*".

Natalia explained that she was considering developing further the creative exploration of the autobiographical material started in the research. She imagined revisiting elements of her first and second performance that she described as a "*new found form*".

Karen found in her second performance a language to "*translate*" the nature of her experience of dyslexia. It represented an important personal achievement as she managed to "*make people see what dyslexia was like*". Karen commented that she "*didn't really want to go beyond the second one*" as she found it difficult to contemplate anything that could follow it. As with Natalia, Karen actualised, before the end of the process, a desire to make the "*invisible*" visible. She eventually managed to reluctantly devise a third performance that was mainly inspired by a group activity. She invited the audience on stage as a form of collective action against negative thoughts, but also as a form of acknowledgement of what connects us to others:

> "*It was autobiographical in the sense of maybe what I would like to happen or what is starting to happen, not what's actually happened. I think by inviting other people in, it was maybe to reaffirm that actually other people have those moments of negativity too. Allowing them to have a space to let it out but also to allow myself to see that I'm not the only person that might sometimes struggle*".

Karen explained that, like Natalia and Jenny, she was thinking of developing her performances further. She envisaged how her second performance could be useful in education settings to raise awareness of dyslexia.

Theme 8: Risks and safety

As a researcher, I spent a significant amount of time considering the risks that the participants could be exposed to as a result of taking part in the research. Yet, this was not an issue that I considered worth including in the questions in the post-project interviews. A number of participants brought my attention to something that I had clearly overlooked, and that was significantly relevant to their experience.

They particularly emphasised how the group made them feel safe enough to explore aspects of their own experience that they might not have previously considered. Natalia described how she felt "*held and supported by everybody*". Louise reflected on the positive influence of her small group and how she felt supported to explore her ideas. This slowly helped her to take greater risks that were made explicit in her third performance. Within this containing structure, Louise took a significant leap of faith in her third performance whereby she literally "*let it out all there*", as she surrounded herself with personal photographs and diary entries. This could have been perceived as a reckless jump. I was curious about how she might have made herself very vulnerable, as she was unable to totally predict how the audience would react to her choices. Louise described how she took great care to select the material for her performance in a way that demonstrated some control over it, and an awareness to keep herself safe:

> "*A lot of the stuff that I had in the performance, it was personal stuff, but I knew that I'd spent time getting things that were appropriately personal. I knew that there was not going to be anything there that was like horrible, or gave too much about me away. It was intrusive, but only to a level. It was open, but to a level of openness*".

Jenny also explained how she felt able to take more risks as she gradually learned, with the support of her small group, that all performances were equally valid regardless of their artistic qualities. This helped her to relieve some of the pressure of wanting to be "*a good actress*".

Karen explained how she took a "*big risk*" by exploring her dyslexia, as this was something she was still "*struggling with*". Although she felt rewarded for having taken such a risk, she also felt disheartened by a written comment of an audience member who, in her third performance, criticised some of her artistic choices. Karen explained how this made her question her own decisions, and whether it had been such a good idea to share what she did. Yet, she described how talking about it in the last focus group helped put things into perspective and regain some confidence.

Theme 9: Support and structure

Most of the research participants reflected on how the structure of the research workshop and the general level of support significantly helped them to engage and feel safe. This was not an area that as a researcher I had thought about including in the interview questions, but that certainly made me consider the way in which a dramatherapy-informed practice differs from other creative practices.

Natalia described how she felt "*held and supported by everybody*", and how she found the structure of the sessions particularly important in her own process throughout the research:

> "*That gave me real foundations to then build on comfortably and try different things and not feel judged and not feel persecuted for whatever I might be doing*".

Natalia also explained how she can find herself "*misbehaving*" in the presence of an "*authority figure*" that she thinks is "*wrong*". She added that in the context of this research it wasn't the case. She recognised how she "*liked and respected*" me as a researcher, and was in some sort of awe for the "*kind of magic*" that I supposedly created to make the group work safely. As she explained:

> "*Whatever it is, the way that you put everything in place must have worked so well because I think there can be a number of challenges in group work, and I don't think anybody had that kind of challenging behaviour*".

Henry enjoyed how the workshop was "*really open*" whilst being clearly "*structured*". He particularly valued the check-in and debrief at the beginning and end of each session.

Karen described how the structure of the workshop helped to create "*connectedness*" and build "*group cohesion*". Karen also highlighted how significant it was for her that the workshop wasn't "*marked*" as part of an assessment, as it was the case in her previous autobiographical performances:

> "*For me that probably took away a fair amount of anxiety. I was really just happy and in the moment, and it felt like a nice process and not a daunting one. It was a completely different way of working than what I'd experienced before where the pressure was on, you had to do it or else you'd fail. That was quite an anxiety provoking thing*".

Like other participants, Karen described how some of the group activities and exercises helped her to develop ideas when she "*really didn't know what to do*".

Sophie also described how the idea of her first performance was "*sparked*" by a structured activity in one of the first group sessions. She also explained how some of her artistic choices within her first performance resulted from another structured activity in the workshop.

Louise described a similar experience with regards to her own process, and the way in which she realised what her last performance would be about. Like Sophie, this was triggered by one of the group activities.

4.4.4. Synthesis of findings for the individual post-project interviews

Theme 1: Witnessing

All participants described the profound impact of witnessing on their individual process and their creative autobiographical journey. Findings from the individual interviews reveal how watching others performing enabled the witnesses to access and connect with estranged parts of themselves, and to become more open and honest in subsequent performances. They also show how witnessing created an inspirational window for artistic opportunities and aesthetic experimentation, and provided a new language for the communication of experience. It created an incentive to take greater risks, to feel more confident, and to give oneself greater permission. Lastly, findings indicate that participants witnessing other performances evoked by their initial performances in the research design, felt validated and recognised in a way that nurtured a sense of wholeness and connectedness between performances.

These findings about the impact of 'witnessing' on the experience of the participants show particular features of the dynamic relationship between the roles of performer and witness, and how these inform the meaning making process. The witnessing of autobiographical performances appears to be a catalyst for personal transformation and for the creation of new possibilities for those watching.

Theme 2: Being witnessed

The thematic category of 'being witnessed' referred to the particular experience of devising and performing for peer research participants and for an external audience.

Theme 2 sub-theme 1: Being witnessed by the group

The impact of being witnessed by the group was not discussed as consistently across participants as 'witnessing' was. Findings from the individual interviews reveal how being witnessed by others in the group had surprising outcomes for some participants. Feedback offered by others in the group was a significant factor in helping to overcome anxiety, to take risks, to find meaning, to feel validated and connected to others, and to structure experience and feelings.

Theme 2 sub-theme 2: Being witnessed by the audience

This thematic category reflects how the research participants experienced the presence of an external audience, but also the responses and comments that emerged from written feedback and two post-performance discussions.

Findings show how some participants found the audience feedback validating as it completed their experience of performing. As in the previous thematic category of being witnessed by the group, the witnessing of the audience made explicit what appeared to be invisible to the performer. This was described in very positive terms by the participants who experienced that process.

In contrast, findings also reveal how some participants experienced negative and critical comments from audience members who questioned some of their artistic choices. These criticisms had the reverse effect of reviving some of the anxiety of being judged, misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Lastly, findings highlight, for some of the participants, the impact of knowing who would be coming to watch the performances. Participants particularly referred to the presence of

friends in the audience, but also to teaching staff within the university in which the research took place.

These findings about the impact of 'being witnessed' on the experience of the participants, particularly help to describe and understand the process of co-creation of meaning in the production of autobiographical performances. The findings show how feedback and discussions with peers in the research group and with audience members, provided clarity about the meaning that the performers assigned to their performances. Importantly, feedback also helped to construct the experience of the participants by naming and structuring affects. For one participant, this helped transcend cultural, linguistic and personal differences.

Yet, feedback collected from the audience also had damaging effects for the performers. This highlights the risks of performing personal material in front of others, but also the methodological risks within the study to enable the audience to comment on the performances.

Theme 3: Resonance

Findings show how resonance was experienced as a connection and identification with the performed autobiographical stories of others in the research group. This connection and identification enabled participants to feel inspired and encouraged to try new things as autobiographical performers. Findings reveal how that connection was made at cognitive and embodied levels, and resulted in participants exploring and experimenting with the content and form of their staged autobiographical choices. Resonance also enabled participants to make personal discoveries that resulted in original representations of personal experiences.

These findings about the function of 'resonance' in the devising of autobiographical performances, help understand particular aspects of the dynamic between performers and witnesses, especially with regards to embodied processes. Findings also show the function of 'resonance' in enabling the participants to reflect on themselves and create knowledge.

Theme 4: Dissonance

Findings indicate that moments of dissonance were rare and shared cautiously. They show that, for one participant in particular, the frustration that was experienced at watching a specific performance, resulted in a desire to be more personal in their own devising. Performances that did not generate an element of interest, were generally met with indifference, distance and disappointment.

These findings about the impact of 'dissonance' on the devising process is indicative of how estrangement and alienation from the autobiographical work of others can also, paradoxically, inform the meaning making process.

Theme 5: Interpersonal dimension

The findings show that the interactions within the whole group and the two smaller groups, were instrumental to the experience of the participants and their engagement in the research. The support of others within the group enabled the research participants to feel accepted, and to become more open and confident. The findings also reveal the impact of pre-existing relationships between some of the participants in the research group, and how it influenced some of their choices.

These findings about the effects of interpersonal relationships help understand how the specific configuration of interactions within the research group produced a particular type of experience for the participants. These interactions significantly contributed to their creative process and to the way in which they found deeper connections with themselves.

Theme 6: Personal change and meaning

The findings show a contrast between the participants who were able to recognise and reflect on change, and those who found it more difficult to verbalise. For some of the participants, the meaning of that change was difficult to articulate discursively, as it seemed to be located within the body and the senses. For others, their involvement in the research resulted in profound changes. The findings show that change and meaning largely emerged from the

interactions and discussions with others in the group, from the experience of being the witness of others, and from being witnessed by others.

These findings help understand how the production of change and meaning in autobiographical performance largely result from exchanges and interactions with others, but also from the dynamic and dialogic relationship between performers and witnesses. They also help understand how pre-reflective knowledge is conveyed through the body.

Theme 7: Artistic choices and process

The findings show how the three different autobiographical performances devised by the participants followed a clear progression, and became for most of them a whole made of interrelated parts. That progression generally resulted in a final performance that was more personal, revealing, authentic, open and honest in content. Findings also show how the different performances reflected artistic choices that significantly varied over time, and illustrated an increased desire to play with the form. The progression was made possible as a result of witnessing other performances, the interpersonal dynamics within the two small groups and the whole group, the witnessing by the external audience, and some structured devising activities in the sessions.

These findings help understand how the progression between performances reveals deeper meaning that emerges from the way in which the participants experienced one another within the group, but also from the way in which the different performances were aesthetically and somatically experienced.

Theme 8: Risks and safety

The findings show how a sense of safety within the whole group and the two smaller groups enabled the research participants to take risks with regards to exploring and devising autobiographical performances. They also show how participants negotiated and managed potentially risky situations that could have made them feel vulnerable and exposed.

These findings help understand how a sense of safety within the group enabled the research participants to take greater risks, which in turn translated in performances that had greater

meaning for those performing. These also help to understand how the assessment and management of risks by the participants within the group were largely the effects of relational dynamics.

Theme 9: Support and structure

The findings reveal how the participants felt supported and contained throughout the practice workshop, and how this significantly helped their engagement and participation. The participants valued the structure of the sessions, and enjoyed the cohesiveness of the group. They also reveal how protective the participants felt towards the research group.

These findings particularly help understand some of the necessary foundations and conditions for a process of co-creation to emerge.

4.5. Focus groups

I now turn to the analysis of the three focus groups that were each held the week following each set of performances. The aim of the focus groups was to give participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the group and as a group. The aim was also to better understand the particular phenomenon under study in this research, and to provide a set of data that could be compared to other methods of data collection. As Litosseliti suggests, 'focus group research is useful for revealing through interaction the beliefs, attitudes, experiences and feelings of participants, in ways which would not be feasible using other methods such as individual interviews' (Litosseliti, 2005, p.16). As individual experience occurs in the context of relationships with others, focus groups are particularly useful and suited to explore the effects of these relationships on experience (Krueger, 1994).

4.5.1. Relational-centred phenomenological analysis of the data

It is important, in the context of this study, to consider whether focus groups lend themselves to a phenomenological analysis of data. Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook and Irvine (2009) discuss this critical issue by describing the contradictions that could exist between the overall

methodological framework, the method of data collection and the method for their analysis. As they explain:

> 'The argument against using focus groups in phenomenological research is that phenomenology seeks essential characteristics or 'essences' of phenomena in a manner that requires an individual to describe their experiences in an 'uncontaminated' way' (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook and Irvine, 2009, p.663).

In other words, it could be argued that focus groups inhibit the way in which individuals are able to talk about their experiences because of the context in which these happen, but equally that a phenomenological analysis of data is not equipped to capture the complexity of interactive exchanges within focus groups. Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook and Irvine reject this argument by providing examples of studies that combined focus groups and a phenomenological methodology. They argue that focus groups are congruent with phenomenological research because they 'support the notion of collaboration and dialogue as being part of the phenomenological endeavour' (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook and Irvine, 2009, p.667).

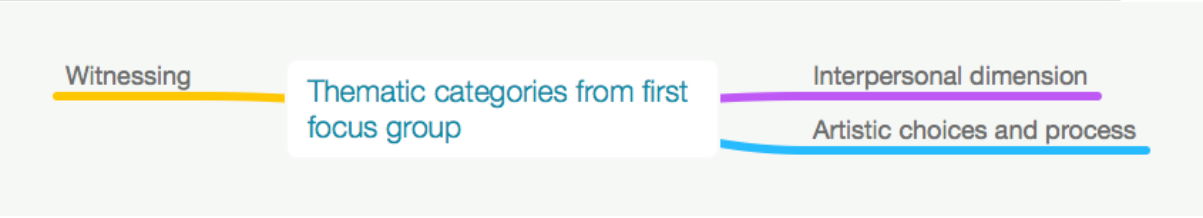
A relational-centred phenomenological analysis recognises and places a particular emphasis on how dialogue and dialogic interactions structure experience (Finlay, 2009a). In that respect, I believe, like Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook and Irvine, that there is no contradiction in using focus groups within a phenomenological framework, and in applying a relational-centred phenomenological analysis to the collected data.

In order to remain consistent with the analysis of the individual interviews, I follow a similar protocol for thematic analysis to the one detailed above (Hycner, 1985), with an additional focus on how the interactions within the group contribute to the emergence of themes. As was the case for the individual interviews, I provide for each focus group a composite summary of findings with overarching themes as they emerged from the group discussions, followed by a synthesis of findings.

4.5.2. Composite summary of findings for the first focus group

The first focus group was held the week directly following the first set of autobiographical performances[44]. All the research participants were present. Three thematic categories emerged as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Themes emerging from the thematic analysis of the first focus group*



<u>Theme 1: Witnessing</u>

No question in the focus group was directly asked about the impact of witnessing other performances. It became a theme as Natalia observed how Nathan's and Louise's performances appeared different from what the other members of the group did. As she explained:

> "*You two both talked about yourselves in a way that maybe the rest of us didn't. I don't know, but for me there was something about both of your performances that was very rebellious*".

Natalia's observation triggered a number of comments from the other participants in the group that made Nathan's performance the focus of the discussion. Sophie commented on the opening line of Nathan's performance that, for her, felt very exposing:

> "*I was like wow, you have just come out and you have just entrusted us with this information about yourself that up until that point I didn't know and so that had quite a big impact for me, and I felt wow, that's honesty right there. I thought that was incredibly brave*".

[44] See Appendix 19: First focus group questions

Jenny described how Nathan's performance gave her some reassurance that it was okay to be direct and open. As she explained:

> "*When Nathan was performing, it was really direct so at that moment I just feel that, I don't know, I just feel that yeah why should I have to worry? No one will judge me or something, just be brave or be honest or something*".

Nathan responded to these comments with some surprise as his initial intention was to bring the focus on a specific global issue that for him appeared to deserve more attention than himself. If his performance started with a personal statement, it was only as a way of introducing the issue that really mattered to him:

> "*Well, yeah, if I can give my perspective on that, I'm a bit, I don't know. (...) I am less concerned in conveying that than this other thing which I think deserves, and so, and I want to do something about it as well. There's only so much talking about myself who is not the solution to the thing that I'm most interested in*".

As the participants started to talk more openly about other performances, they began to make connections with the way others performed. This became particularly the case in regard to Nathan's and Louise's performances. Natalia observed how she connected with Nathan's and Louise's stories because of their "*directness*". Sophie also observed how she made a "*connection*" with Nathan's autobiography because of a reference to a TV series that she used to watch as a child. Louise explained how she found it "*interesting*" that she could "*relate to*" a lot of stories that were performed, or "*interpret"* them in a way that she could identify with.

<u>Theme 2: Interpersonal dimension</u>

All the research participants reflected on the effects of the interactions with others within the group on their individual process. This was mainly but not solely in response to my question on the subject.

Jenny explained how her position within the group as a non-native English speaker, resulted in considering more seriously than she had previously done, the emotional impact of being in a different cultural and linguistic environment. She felt able to share within her small group a particular dream that made her realise the impact of "*language barrier*", a subject that up to

that point she tended to "*always avoid talking about*". For Jenny, the exchanges within her small group were like a springboard to explore a disregarded aspect of her experience.

Henry also observed how his small group "*particularly*" helped him to develop ideas. Karen shared similar views when explaining how her small group provided the support to try things in a non-judgmental way:

> "*Having that forum, that space to be able to do that and not guilty and not feel judged or any of that kind of stuff, and get feedback about how it looked and, "Oh maybe you can try that. Oh, you know, that was really watchable", that kind of stuff that made it feel like it was going to work*".

Nathan explained how a sense of mutual support in the group made "*things hugely more possible*". Louise also observed how the feedback and support in her small group gave her "*the motivation to carry on*", and to remain focused. Sophie described how the group "*validated*" her ideas in helping her to realise how all experiences and memories in her life were equally important. Sophie observed how her experience of the research was very dependent on the group, and how it "*would have been an incredibly different experience*" in a different group.

In direct response to Sophie, Natalia explained how she disagreed with her statement because she joined the research with a pre-existing idea of what she wanted to perform. Natalia acknowledged the "*support*" of her group, but felt that,

> "*potentially, it would have been a very similar piece if I'd done it with a different group*".

Yet, Natalia also explained how she had to review the way she thought about her performance as the person she initially chose to be her main character dropped out in the first weeks of the workshop. Natalia's observation made me think in the interview about the three people who disengaged from the group and the kind of impact this had. Only Henry responded by saying that it had made the group and the performances more manageable.

Sophie observed how she felt much more comfortable in the group given that her participation was not assessed, as it had been the case when training as a dramatherapist:

"*This situation is so different from the education setting that it's just incredibly freer*".

Karen who also completed her dramatherapy training echoed similar feelings, and recalled, like Sophie, some of the "*competition*" that existed between students. As Karen described it:

> "*It feels a lot more authentic like there's no kind of like performances to almost like get back at the fact that we're being marked, which they kind of was in the previous ones*".

Sophie made the group aware of the fact that I was her tutor on the autobiographical module when she trained as a dramatherapist, yet she felt that it hadn't "*affected anything at all*".

Theme 3: Artistic choices and process

The research participants spent quite a lot of time reflecting on their individual performances and on the process leading to these, in direct response to my first question.

Several participants noticed how they chose, without consulting one another, similar methods of performing that demonstrated a need to stay within familiar and safe boundaries, to control the level of personal exposure, and to create distance with what was revealed and shared. Three performances made use of stories as metaphors (Natalia, Sophie and Karen), three made use of pre-recorded voices (Karen, Sophie and Jenny), and two were not directly using spoken words (Louise and Henry).

Sophie observed how "*at least three of the performances started with 'once upon a time'*", including her own. She described how she decided to pre-record the narration of her story "*for ease*". Sophie gave details of her artistic choices in the following exchange with myself as I was trying to understand her motivations:

"*Sophie:* *It was a way of distancing myself from the performance, I suppose, so that I was able to tell my story but it wasn't too close to me so I think that's why I chose to show it that way.*

Researcher: *So, you kind of made that choice to uh--to make yourselves safe on stage?*

Sophie: *To make myself safe, to distance myself from it a little bit more personally so that I could show the story.*

Researcher: *To distance yourself from it so you could show it.*

Sophie: *Yeah. Yeah. And also to put less pressure on myself, because I think I have a great way of overcomplicating things*".

Karen explained how she also pre-recorded her voice because she simply did a similar thing in previous autobiographical performances. She also described how she did not follow an initial idea but instead chose something that felt safer:

> "*I think I was also protecting myself by not doing the original thing I thought I was going to do and kind of putting a bit of distance*".

Natalia reminded the group that she joined the research with a "*pre-formed idea*". She explained how she chose to hide her story behind the safety of the metaphor as the only possible way for her to tell that story:

> "*And you know, whatever I did, I just had to find more and more layers and barriers to kind of just have … even more distancing*".

Jenny realised, as a direct result of hearing Natalia talking about distancing, that she chose to record her own voice as a way of detaching herself from the spoken words. As she explained,

> "*So that is the same when Natalia she mentioned that, I just think about … "Yeah." I didn't think about the distance at that moment. I just think that, "Oh, I can't do that," but when you mentioned it, oh yeah, it's kind of like I want to make the distance, without being too close to my character*".

Like Sophie, Henry noticed how "*the idea of storytelling was quite prominent*" in a few performances, including his own. He observed how "*it was interesting that that kind of theme kept happening*". Henry suggested that storytelling offered safe distance especially when having never done a performance based on autobiographical material:

> "*I suppose the most natural way to do that is by turning it into a story, so then you feel a little bit more detached from it and then you feel you are more able to perform it*".

Henry also described how he chose the familiar subject of his first year at university as a way of keeping himself safe, but also as a way of not revealing too much about himself:

> "*I just thought that was easier and I just thought it was more truthful because there was nothing I was like burning to talk about, there was nothing like I really, really*

> *wanted to explore through performance, um, so like there were things I could've done but I didn't want to force it*".

Nathan described a different approach to devising than the other participants in the group. As opposed to others, he did not use pre-recordings and was very direct in the way he presented himself on stage. As he noticed in reaction to the way in which others talked about their artistic choices,

> "*I'm thinking … I'm just thinking, "Hmm, hmm, yeah, maybe I should try some of these recorded narration thing," but then I think I like the uh, lightness of saying the words without it being a recording*".

Louise, quite noticeably, did not contribute to that part of the discussion.

4.5.3. Synthesis of findings for the first focus group

Theme 1: Witnessing

The findings mainly show how some of the performances raised a lot of interest because of their directness and openness. This reveals a first level of connection between some of the performances, and the way in which they created possibilities for those watching.

Theme 2: Interpersonal dimension

The findings show how the nature of interpersonal exchanges within the group significantly contributed to the development of the first set of autobiographical performances. The level of support was perceived as an important factor to facilitate the engagement of the participants in the creation of autobiographical performances.

These findings help understand how the nature of interpersonal relationships within the research group contributed to the way in which the research participants approached and devised their first autobiographical performance.

Theme 3: Artistic choices and process

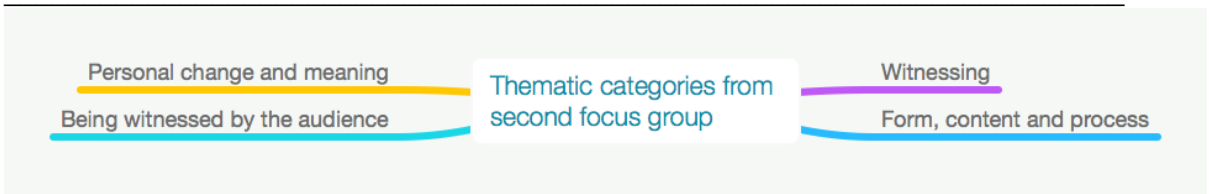
The thematic category of 'artistic choices and process' referred to the way in which the research participants described the process leading to their first autobiographical performance. The findings mainly show how most of the research participants selected aesthetic forms that reflected a desire for safety, control and distance. These initial choices responded to an internal need for the research participants to protect themselves at this early stage of the research.

4.5.4. Composite summary of findings for the second focus group

The second focus group was held in the week directly following the second set of autobiographical performances. Only four research participants (Natalia, Karen, Sophie and Jenny) attended the focus group[45]. The remaining three participants were invited to complete a questionnaire containing the same questions asked in the focus group. Only Nathan returned his questionnaire.

Four thematic categories emerged from the second focus group as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Themes emerging from the thematic analysis of the second focus group*



Theme 1: Witnessing

The theme of witnessing directly emerged from the way in which I structured the questions of the focus group. It referred to three distinctive moments of the participants' experience:

[45] See Appendix 20: Second focus group questions

1. the way in which they experienced the second set of performances as witnesses of others,
2. the impact of witnessing the first set of autobiographical performances at the end of the first stage of the workshop design on the creation and devising of their second performance,
3. the way in which they experienced witnessing other performances evoked by their first performance.

Natalia described how she found the second performances very "*potent*". The second performances illustrated how everyone in the group went deeper into themselves to reach greater honesty. As she explained:

> "*Suddenly I think people had gone to a place within themselves that they had only tiptoed around, but then with the help of this influence that, that they got from others, they just really got into business of looking inside them and showing what's there*".

Karen described how she found the second performances "*interesting*" as they reflected what the first performances "*evoked in others*". Sophie observed how she found them much more "*playful*", as if something had been released that enabled a more open engagement with personal material.

Karen explained how watching the first performances of Jenny and Sophie activated and actualised a long-standing desire to talk about something really personal like her dyslexia, and to find a way of communicating what it felt like to her. She described how she strongly identified with both performances and how this opened a horizon of possibilities with regards to understanding her own dyslexia. As she explained, talking about Sophie's and Jenny's first performances:

> "*Like the spirit of the adventure of learning about yourself and then the not understanding, but finding a way to understand, and like trying to break through that communication barrier, which is actually sometimes something I find really hard to like get out what's in there, so for me it was just mirroring and reflecting the whole time, like my process, so I think that's why those two stood out for me so much, was because it was evoking a story that I'd already experienced and felt that I needed to get out*".

Karen explained how she was influenced by "*the spirit of both of those pieces*". Nathan used similar words in his questionnaire:

> "*I was inspired by the sense of growth in Sophie's first performance 'Adventures'. I wanted my second performance to have that spirit*".

Sophie described how witnessing others resulted in giving herself "*permission*" to do things outside of what felt familiar to her, and to find it "*quite exhilarating*":

> "*I sort of played it safe the first time around, because I did what I know, whereas the second time around I had, like I had permission to do something different from what I would normally do*".

Natalia identified with Sophie's way of describing her experience although initially not recognising herself in the use of the term "*permission*". Comparatively, Natalia described how she was "*influenced*" by a number of other performances, and how these gave her "*access to things*" she doesn't "*normally access*". More specifically, Natalia explained how seeing others performing in a "*nonverbal way*" opened new possibilities for her. She also noticed how the three performances that influenced her, negotiated a different kind of relationship with the audience:

> "*All three of them were interacting with the audience in some way, so that was the, um, and, and they weren't afraid to kind of show what they had and allow the audience almost touch it*".

Natalia described the impact of watching others in the following terms:

> "I felt able to *explore parts of myself that I don't normally explore, um, but then the realization that those are also parts of myself is what gave me the joy and, and a sense of wholeness*".

Like Karen and Sophie, Natalia described how she did something in her second performance that she had not anticipated when she joined the research.

With regards to the way in which the research participants experienced witnessing other performances evoked by their first performance, Jenny and Karen described their experiences strikingly differently than Sophie and Natalia. Jenny explained how she profoundly identified with Karen's second performance in a way that helped her to make sense of her first performance, especially in relation to experiencing communication difficulties. As she said:

> "*When I saw Karen's performance ... I don't know, I, this is the first time I selfish thinks, "Oh, it's for me." (laughs) "I think she's talking to me", so I was very moved*

> *when she read the poem, because I just thought that she said something through her mouth, but is talking to me and is about me, and so, so watching her performance at that moment, I think two of us are, are the same person*".

Karen also described how Jenny's second performance "*evoked ideas*" of her first performance. She gave herself "*permission*" to "*actively try to interpret*" Jenny's second performance based on the links she could identify with her own performance, and to also vice-versa interpret her own performance in the light of Jenny's one.

In contrast, Sophie and Natalia explained how they failed to recognize any links with the second performances of Nathan and Louise which had been evoked by their first performances. Sophie described it as "*really frustrating*", whilst Natalia explained how she "*did not connect at all*".

I observed in a sub-question that Louise and Nathan were not present in the focus group to respond to the experience they described. I wondered whether they would talk about it in the same way if they were present. Karen responded by saying that somehow their inability to explain themselves left a gap that would not be filled.

Theme 2: Being witnessed by the audience

For the first time in the research workshop, the second set of autobiographical performances was opened to an invited audience that the research participants were able to choose. The performances were followed by a discussion with the audience.

Jenny most notably commented on the positive impact of the discussion with the audience on her own experience of performing. For her, the interaction with the audience helped validate, clarify and normalise her feelings:

> "*I let something out, and the audience give me some feedback, let me think, "Oh yeah, I'm quite normal. I'm not freak or something." Yeah, that is, uh, that, that, that day. After that day, I realized this*".

Natalia described a very different experience. For her, the audience appeared intrusive, and did not "*give an extra*" other than creating "*a real atmosphere of performance*". She chose

not to talk to the audience about her experience and resisted attempts that would challenge the safe distance that she created between herself and her story. As she explained,

> "*I never like the audience. I never like talking to the audience or interacting with them. I just want to think they don't exist, so, um, I just thought it was quite exposed, um, just there talking to them, and it was good to hear their impressions, and they were so nice, which is always like encouraging, but in a way for me the performances were for us, not for the audience*".

Theme 3: Personal change and meaning

The thematic category of 'personal change and meaning' refers to the way in which the research participants experienced change following their second autobiographical performance, and how they understood that change.

All of the four research participants in the focus group explained how their second autobiographical performance marked a significant change in their individual process, and held significant discoveries, possibilities and meanings.

Karen described how her second performance gave her an opportunity to talk about her dyslexia, and to help people understand and experience what it was like for her. This gave her a sense of "*being in control*" over a condition that up to that point she had felt disempowered by:

> "*That meaningful time of being in charge and taking charge of my confusion, and channelling it into becoming already part of the thing I was trying to get out*".

In addition, she also commented on how she made the decision to involve others in her performance, and to open her performance space at the same time as she was opening her internal space:

> "*By asking people to make sound in the background, I know they weren't on the stage with me, but for me it's a big deal. I don't often, like in my other autobiographical pieces, I don't really like people being in my space. I just so, I do it on my own, leave it*".

As Karen concluded:

> "*The last performance gave me so much. I found the confidence in myself I never had before, which was really really new to me*".

Jenny described her second performance as "*less personal*" but "*more enjoyable*" and "*playful*". Yet, her second performance marked a significant shift in helping her to understand the value of performance as a powerful mode of communication. It also illustrated a shift in her relationship to herself as an actress:

> "*I just realized that, um, I need to do some performance or kind of this art things to express myself, and it's kind of healthy way. I don't, actually I don't care people think my performance is not really good or is the technology's not good or I'm not a good actor or something. I don't care. I just want to say something, but through not just talking, and it made me feel very safe to using this*".

Sophie also described herself as being more "*playful*" in her second performance. She elaborated less than the other participants on what had particularly been meaningful to her, other than generally observing that:

> "*The whole process has been meaningful and there has been so many moments within each session*".

For Sophie, it felt like she was slowly settling into a process that was gradually unfolding. As she explained, "*I was more, I suppose, more relaxed and happy to just play and see what comes up*".

In direct response to my question on meaningful moments in the workshop, Natalia explained how something very significant happened to her on the way to the last rehearsal, the week before the second set of performances. She described it as a "*moment of awareness*" where "*everything makes sense somehow*":

> "*I just felt whole. Suddenly it all made sense. But what made sense? I don't know, but something did. Something came together inside*".

Natalia explained how she was deeply inspired and found new means of expression in the "*non-verbalness*" of other performances. She did not seem able to elaborate further on the shift that happened within her as if it didn't belong to the domain of verbal language.

Theme 4: Form, content and process

The research participants commented on the changes they noticed in the form and content of their second performance compared to their first one.

Jenny noticed how Natalia's performance was "*like an exhibition*", whereas she adopted a storytelling format for her first one. Karen also chose a storytelling structure for her first performance and then found a different form of representation for her second performance to explore her dyslexia:

> "*It went through like a, a stage of developing in my brain my idea, and then me trying to understand it, and it put it out into the world (…). So it was that, going from not understanding to understanding to then trying to get it out and translate*".

Both Natalia and Karen made use of distance in the devising of their first performance but adopted a different way of performing in their second performance as a direct result of their experience within the group. They both appeared to renegotiate the balance between form and content as they were entering new territories. As Natalia explained:

> "*Second time around I did something I didn't know, so it was like being open to the unknown*".

Natalia described how she became "*more experimental*" with the form as opposed to directly exploring a particular aspect of her own self:

> "*For me, what allowed the depth was being able to try something that I hadn't done before"*.

Sophie explained how she gave herself permission to play more freely with the content and the form in her second performance. She described a distinctive sense of ownership which reflected the way in which she gradually made the process her own:

> "*It didn't matter if it went wrong, because the performance is ours. It's mine. It's what I make of it. No one can say that it's wrong, because I, it's mine, you know. Even if it's completely different to how I rehearsed, it's still my performance. It's still autobiographical. It's whatever I put out there*".

Nathan described, in the questionnaire, how his second performance was "*a continuation and development*" of his first in content. This confirmed how Sophie perceived his second

performance and her ensuing sense of frustration. Yet, Nathan also explained how he wanted and tried to experiment with the form:

> "*With the second piece I'm looking to move beyond simply telling my story and I'm trying to find a way to invite others to join me in taking action. This has been important to me from the start*".

4.5.5. Synthesis of findings for the second focus group

Theme 1: Witnessing

The findings clearly show how witnessing the autobiographical performances of others activated and actualised a desire to creatively explore and communicate aspects of oneself through performance. Findings also reveal how an identification with the story of others through witnessing enabled an emotional connection with personal material. Witnessing provided a distance that enabled the research participants to safely access parts of their own self that they protected themselves from. Lastly, witnessing enlarged the space of the possible to explore and understand personal experience.

These findings help understand how the witnessing of autobiographical performances creates significant possibilities for the exploration and representation of aspects of the self, as a direct result of experiencing others as they presented themselves in performance. Most importantly, the findings help understand how this process is the result of an emotional and embodied engagement with the performed stories of others, whose aesthetic representation provides enough distance for personal transformation and insight.

Theme 2: Being witnessed by the audience

The findings show that for some participants the audience was experienced as a validating factor that confirmed, normalised and clarified aspects of their performances. For others, the audience was experienced as an intrusion into a process that felt very personal and did not require any additional verbal explanations.

These findings about the impact of 'being witnessed by the audience' highlight a contrast between experiences that either considered the role of the audience as important in the way meaning is constructed, or as inconsequential and superfluous.

Theme 3: Personal change and meaning

The findings clearly show how the second performances contrasted in form and content with the first ones. Change was described in terms of finding a new expressive language, feeling more empowered, letting go of expectations, making new discoveries, or becoming more playful. Change in the aesthetics of the performances reflect deeper meaning that the participants were able or not able to verbalise.

These findings help understand how the process of change and its meaning, in the context of this research, largely emerge from a particular relationship with the performed stories of others, and the opportunity to devise a new performance based on that experience. This also helps understand how new meanings are not solely reflected in the content of the performances but also in their aesthetics.

Theme 4: Form, content and process

The findings show how the research participants became generally more experiential in their approach to form and content in their second performance, whilst renegotiating the distance between aesthetics and experience. This change in approach generally resulted in greater clarity, understanding and acceptance.

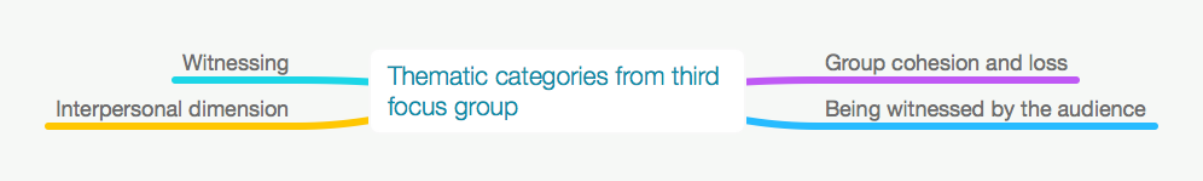
These findings help understand how creative, expressive and aesthetic possibilities are created through the dynamic relationship between witness and performer in autobiographical performance. This results in renewed ways of envisaging and understanding oneself through others as performers of their own autobiographical moments.

4.5.6. Composite summary of findings for the third focus group

The third focus group was held in the last week of the research workshop, a week directly after the third and last set of autobiographical performances[46]. This was the last time the participants came together as a group. The session was planned to also be a closure whereby participants were offered space to say their goodbyes. The focus group was held in the first half of the session. In the second half, participants were invited to gather around a willow tree for a closing ritual. They were invited to share thoughts and memories associated with the group, to write these on labels, and to attach these to the tree that they also decorated[47] [48].

All the participants were present for the last focus group. There was a general feeling of coming together for the last time. Four thematic categories emerged from the third focus group as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Themes emerging from the thematic analysis of the third focus group*



<u>Theme 1: Group cohesion and loss</u>

The participants described a general sense of appreciation for one another following their involvement in what had been an intensive and intimate experience. Sophie started the focus group by thanking her small group for the support they provided. She commented on how she felt that the last performances showed how the group had become much more "*spontaneous and playful*". Henry commented on how he decided to involve members of the large group in his last performance as a way of acknowledging their contribution.

[46] See Appendix 21: Third focus group questions
[47] See Appendix 22: Picture of closing ritual
[48] See Appendix 23: Labels from closing ritual

Natalia explained how she "*did feel privileged*" to watch others performing their third piece. She described later in the focus group how she felt that the group had developed as an ensemble, as a result of the "*connections*" that had been created. As she put it, "*for me we were very much a company performing in a particular style*".

Natalia also commented on how the structure of the research workshop had been instrumental in helping participants to get to know one another, to work as a group, to feel safe, and to gradually become more open. Karen also commented on how important the structure and the support within the group had been for her:

> "*I've never felt so comfortable in a situation to expose myself as much as I have. So that was pretty crazy for me and lovely at the same time*".

Nathan shared a similar experience:

> "*Over the course of 20 weeks it's been a great support and kind of we have made a really creative space*".

Henry asked the group a question that appeared to reflect a curiosity concerning the end of the group process. Talking about his individual journey, Henry stated:

> "*I kind of feel like mine's finished. (...) So if I had to do it again it would definitely be something, a complete departure from everything I've done so far. (...) So I was wondering if it's the same for other people?*"

Henry seemed curious about how the other participants were negotiating the ending and whether they all felt like him. Henry's question reflected a possible unconscious desire to know what would happen to the other participants, and whether something of their individual creation would survive beyond the boundaries of the workshop. He seemed to voice on behalf of the group something that reflected a collective sadness for the loss of what all the participants described as a positive and rewarding experience. Sophie felt that her process was "*complete*", but other participants explained how they would continue their individual exploration as if a seed had been planted. Karen explained that:

> "*Although my ... it's complete for me here, like the performance wise, I feel like it's going to be an ever ongoing project within myself. Not something I outwardly perform but something that I practice on a daily basis*".

Natalia indicated that for her there would be a "*next stage*" as she did not totally manage to achieve what she was hoping for by the end of her last performance. Nathan also indicated that for him the process what not totally complete, as he was considering "*combining*" his three performances. Louise and Jenny did not directly respond to the question raised by Henry.

Theme 2: Witnessing

All the research participants commented on the impact of witnessing on their individual process with great enthusiasm and animation. All the participants described how they thoroughly enjoyed the last performances and how they made new discoveries about each other. As Sophie explained:

> "*I really enjoyed seeing everyone else's performances and I saw new things that I hadn't seen in rehearsal*".

The research participants openly shared how they valued the changes they noticed in the different performances. This illustrated a sense of mutual recognition that characterised the overall tone of the focus group. The participants commented on the impact of witnessing in a very complementary way. Henry explained that:

> "*I think that's, it's kind of, it makes it deeper and it makes it a much more thorough process and it definitely brings out stuff which wouldn't have happened*".

Jenny described how watching others encouraged her to take greater risks:

> "*I see their performance give me some confidence or encouragement to do something new, I think*".

Louise explained how watching others created new artistic possibilities:

> "*I think I definitely got like some ideas for my performances from other people even though I kind of changed as I went on*".

Sophie described how watching others gave her permission to explore a different part of herself:

> "*I was quite sort of conservative almost I suppose in my first performance. I suppose in a way, it gave me permission to be brave and to let down my barriers a little bit (…). I was then allowed to bring inspiration from others in and so that for me was, yeah, it was a way of sort of getting permission to create something that I wouldn't normally have created, and it was nice because it was still me. It was just a part of me that I tend to lock away a little bit*".

Natalia confirmed what Sophie said when explaining:

> "*I agree with everything Sophie said, that for me it gave me licence, not licence as such, but it encouraged or inspired me to explore things in a way I would never have explored normally. Uh, and I found it extremely liberating and enjoyed it massively. Uh, and it made me discover something artistically about myself. It's not a side of me that I discovered, it's a side of me that I've, uhm, developed*".

Karen also commented on how witnessing others enabled her to get closer to herself:

> "*Having, you know, being able to watch other performances and then have a like, have a reaction evoked within me, it actually led me closer to myself and what was about me. Okay, it might be just like an aspect of me, but it brought me closer to me"*.

Nathan described how for him the different performances appeared to be in a dialogue, talking and responding to one another in a way that added depth to the individual process:

> "*I like it the way it's been where we have all been uhm, sparking off each other I suppose. It's like a conversation. (…) Yeah, because we've been speaking and then we've been listening too, in terms of ... yeah, so there's a kind of conversation of performance*".

Henry offered a metaphor of a tree to summarise the way in which the different performances grew out of that conversation:

> "*So the first performance was the roots, and the second performance was the trunk and the last performance was the branches*".

<u>Theme 3: Being witnessed by the audience</u>

Some of the participants explained how they felt upset and hurt by the responses of the audience to their last performance, and what appeared to be the response of one particular audience member. A significant amount of the focus group was spent on this issue as it felt

important for the participants to share and process their experiences and emotions in the context of the group.

Henry started the discussion by explaining how he felt "*really annoyed*" to have received "*blank pieces of paper from some of the audience*", as they were invited at the end of each performance to write down possible moments of resonance:

> "*I was like 'no', and I was really offended and I thought it was really rude ... but, uhm, I went like ... fair enough, they didn't have anything to say, but I just thought, don't hand in a blank piece*".

The description that Henry gave of the non-responsiveness of audience members, enabled other participants to share similar experiences whereby they were left feeling disrespected by responses that they perceived as malevolent and intrusive. Sophie described how a written comment by an audience member left her feeling vulnerable and exposed, as it criticised her choice of making use of her singing voice:

> "*yeah, mine was like oh, uhm, it was great apart from the song. Uhm, and I was just like oh, because that was the bit that I was actually quite you know, nervous about, because I don't sing in front of people, like it just isn't something that I do. (…) and so, yeah, it just ... it was a bit of a downer*".

Karen explained how reading one piece of feedback made her feel judged and criticised, and how it had a profound impact on her opinion of herself. The following extract illustrates her reaction as I tried to understand her experience:

"Researcher:	*So you said that that moment, that comment from one person in the audience -*
Karen:	*Ruined my whole feeling about it, yeah ... and I know I have a tendency to be put off. It can just be like literally an offhand comment from somebody that can make me feel ... but I haven't felt that way in quite some time and I don't know why it took such an effect, but I just thought you know actually, we're kind of coming on stage, showing parts of ourselves, aspects of our life and whatever and actually I think that should be approached with a bit more (pause)-*
Sophie:	*Respect!*
Researcher:	*What are you left with now?*

Karen: *I think I feel angry, but also disappointed that I can't enjoy that last performance anymore. Well I can and I will be. Probably give me a month, give me a couple of months and I'll feel happy about it again, but right now I just keep thinking about that comment*".

The anger that Karen described was shared by other participants. I was curious about the anger that was being expressed and what it was about. Sophie provided the following explanation:

> "*I suppose it's quite disrespectful, because you know ... you're putting something out there that can potentially make you vulnerable. Uhm, I was putting stuff out there that I haven't put out, you know, and so I suppose I would want that to be treated with a little bit of respect and understanding that actually this is quite scary. This is something new and this is a part of me. You might not understand it, the way I'm presenting it may not be conventional, but this is what it is and you're just here to witness and accept that*".

Natalia suggested that as upsetting as that comment might have been, it shouldn't overshadow what the group had managed to achieve. She observed that for her the main audience was the group itself, and that the external audience was not adding anything significant to the process, other than "*normalising*" it. As she explained, "*the audience for me is here*".

Theme 4: Interpersonal dimension

A number of participants described how the interactions and exchanges within the group and the two smaller groups impacted on their experience and facilitated the progression between their different performances.

Nathan and Henry had a significant exchange whereby Nathan was able to recognise how one of Henry's comments had "*pushed*" him "*to do something more*" in his last performance. As Nathan remembered:

> "*Well look, it was your comment actually, because you said at some point, I can't remember where, it must have been after the second performance ... It needs to be something more. It's you kind of said something like that. It's not enough, it need to be more*".

Henry responded to Nathan's comment by sharing what he remembered from Nathan's previous performances:

> "*The content was all there and the content was all great, it was just, it kind of felt like you were stopping yourself from going that little bit further, which I think is clear from the third performance that maybe you did kind of think well actually yeah, let's do it*".

For Nathan, that exchange with Henry gave him an impulse to act differently and try something new.

Henry commented on how he felt his small group helped him to develop and actualise ideas. Sophie also explained how she benefited from the interactions within her small group which supported her creative aspirations. Karen observed how interacting with others in her small group and in the large group felt as important as witnessing the performances:

> "*I think it wasn't just the witness thing, but it was also being there in the group, in the big group and then the smaller group. Being able to help people make their ideas come alive and help them or brainstorm or think of all the different ways that this could be done*".

4.5.7. Synthesis of findings for the third focus group

Theme 1: Group cohesion and loss

The findings show how the research participants shared a general sense of attachment to the research group, and of mutual recognition for what they achieved in the performance workshop. The participants felt protective of one another when exposed to criticism from the audience. The findings also show how the participants valued the support of the group and the structure of the performance workshop that helped them to develop their respective performances. Finally, the findings show how a number of research participants attached a particular meaning to their performances as they expressed an interest to pursue the creative exploration of their autobiographical work.

These findings help understand how the meaning of the participants' experience in the research group is largely the result of the relationships built in the group, and of the way in which they felt supported by one another.

Theme 2: Witnessing

The findings generally confirm what the other focus groups revealed in terms of the possibilities and connections created through the process of witnessing. For some of the participants witnessing enabled them to take greater risks, to create artistic possibilities, or to develop artistically. For others, it was like a catalyst that helped them connect with particular aspects of themselves.

As in the previous focus groups, the findings help understand how new meanings associated with the creation of autobiographical performances emerged from the aesthetic and embodied experience of witnessing other performances.

Theme 3: Being witnessed by the audience

The findings show how some of the participants felt undermined, upset and irritated by the critical reaction of one particular audience member. They reveal how this had a profound impact on the way in which the participants experienced themselves as performers, but also on how they related to the material of their own performances. Anger became a shared emotion within the research group when talking about that particular experience. Findings show how the criticism and the lack of recognition from one audience member left some of the participants feeling invalidated and vulnerable.

These findings help understand how the response of the audience as witness plays a significant role in shaping the experience of the participants' performances, but also their meaning. This raises issues about the potentially damaging role of the audience through feedback, and the readiness of the performers to tolerate criticism.

Theme 4: Interpersonal dimension

The findings show how the interactions and exchanges between participants in the large group and the two smaller working groups were as important as the process of witnessing was. Comments from participants within the group stimulated creative and atypical responses in the devising process.

As in the first focus group, these findings confirm how relational dynamics within the research group, through comments, sharing and feedback, contributed to the way in which the research participants thought about and devised their autobiographical performances.

4.6. Analysis of the autobiographical performances

The research participants produced a total of twenty-one autobiographical performances over the course of the performance workshop. As explained in the research design in the previous chapter, the participants produced performances that were devised as a direct result of reversing positions between being performer and witness. The performances constituted the experiential part of the research. The three different sets of performances were filmed, constituting the audio-visual data for the analysis.

The creative method of inquiry that was privileged for this research seems to arguably call for a creative method of data analysis, to help unveil and reveal the way in which the different performances relate to and resonate with one another. Butler-Kisber describes how the visual research method of the collage based on 'the juxtaposition of fragments' (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.102) provides a way of understanding how meaning emerges from the relation between these different fragments. Gowland-Pryde gives an example of how collage is used in autobiographical research to describe how the 'layering of significant moments creates wider meaning' (Gowland-Pryde, 2016, p.28).

The cinematic montage technique of the split-screen appears to be the equivalent of the method of the collage applied to moving images. Bizzocchi (2009) describes it as a multi-windowed form of cinematographic expression characterised by the simultaneous and contiguous projection of different but complementary moving images in one single frame. It

creates a multi-screen that has the clear advantage of integrating different narratives or perspectives into one single frame, and of presenting the viewer with a number of juxtaposed realities. It has been used, for instance, by filmmakers such as Mike Figgis in *Timecode* (2000), and in the cinematographic adaptation of *The Laramie Project* (2002) directed by Moisés Kaufman.

For the specific purpose of this research, I chose to put together an audio-visual montage based on the recordings of the autobiographical performances. I chose to make use of the cinematographic technique of the split-screen as an original form of visual data presentation. This was undertaken with the specific intention of showing and apprehending the different layers of relationality between the different performances produced by the research participants. It shows an intentional use of an arts-based framework to communicate the research findings (Jones, 2012b).

The film 'audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances' is available by accessing the following link[49]:
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo.

The process of montage and editing needed to be approached with the highest rigour and integrity. Following the framework described by Richards (1995) to conduct performance as research[50], I adopted criteria that were directly grounded in the experience of the research participants as described in the post-project individual interviews and in the three focus groups. In other words, the selected criteria for editing directly reflect the phenomenological data and the thematic categories presented above. The analysis of the performances is therefore not solely concerned with showing the relations between them, but also with creating a dialogue between the different methodological perspectives adopted in this research, with the view of deepening the understanding of the phenomenon under study and of providing an analysis directly embedded in the experience of the participants. Based on the thematic categories, the analysis of the performances can be described as a cross-performance thematic video analysis making use of the technique of the split-screen.

[49] This link is shared through Google Drive and only accessible through this thesis
[50] See subsection 3.2.1.7 in Chapter 3

As we have seen from the analysis of the individual post-project interviews and the focus groups, there is a general consistency in the thematic categories that emerged from the data. In order to make the process of analysis clearer, I chose to condense the different thematic categories into six main ones. These six categories represent the criteria that were used for the making and editing of the film, and the presentation of the visual data. They are:

- Witnessing (including resonance)
- Being witnessed (by the group and the audience)
- Interpersonal dimension (including dissonance)
- Personal change and meaning
- Artistic choices and process (form and content)
- Risks and safety (including support and structure)

The film is divided into seven parts that correspond to the experience of the seven research participants. It represents a 'general structural synthesis' (Wertz, 2005, p.174) of the research that weaves together different strands of visual and phenomenological data. It includes a number of excerpts from the individual interviews and the focus groups. A more detailed and critical discussion of this audio-visual output in relation to other findings in the research will be presented in the next chapter.

4.7. Post-performance audience discussions and questionnaire

As outlined in the methodology chapter, the second set of performances at the end of the second stage of the performance workshop design was open to an invited audience made of friends and families. The third set of performances at the end of the last stage of the performance workshop design was open to the general public.

Two post-performance audience discussions were held at the end of the second and third set of performances. The discussion lasted for about 15 minutes after the second set, and 20 minutes after the third set. As part of the third performances, audience members were also invited to complete a short questionnaire, and to write on slips of paper 'moments of resonance' with the performances that they witnessed. These were collected in individual tins

for each performer. They were given to them at the beginning of the discussion session with the audience.

The aim of this section is not to analyse the experience of audience members, but rather to examine their responses in reaction to the performances of the research participants. As we have seen in the analysis of the post-project individual interviews and the focus groups, these responses had significant validating and invalidating effects. It is my intention to examine how these were formulated in the post-performance audience discussions and the questionnaire.

4.7.1. Audience discussion after the second set of autobiographical performances

Reaction to performer 1 (Natalia):

An audience member commented on how the performance "*really touched*" her, but also on how desperate she was to know what it meant. Natalia responded by explaining how a need for distance explained her artistic choices. She refused to be any more specific. The audience member accepted the response and replied that Natalia should be very pleased and proud for "*coming forward with that story*".

Reaction to performer 2 (Louise):

An audience member reflected on how Louise's performance showed pictures on a slideshow that disclosed personal information, and how it made her feel "*uncomfortable about discovering private details*", but how she also experienced it as a "*gift*". Louise did not respond directly to the comment.

Reaction to performer 3 (Sophie):

An audience member briefly commented on how she enjoyed the soundtrack of Sophie's performance.

Reactions to performer 4 (Nathan):

An audience member commented on how she was left unsatisfied by Nathan's performance as she felt that "*something interactive could have happened*". The audience member explained how she would have liked the performance to "*get bigger*". Nathan acknowledged the comment but did not offer a response.

Reaction to performer 5 (Karen):

An audience member commented on how she enjoyed the soundscape of the performance as she felt "*audibly bombarded*". Another audience member commented on how she connected with the way in which Karen presented dyslexia and the "*label*" attached to it. Karen did not directly respond to any of the comments.

Reaction to performer 6 (Jenny):

An audience member commented on how Jenny's performance felt "*terrifying*", especially as a result of being blindfolded. Another audience member also explained how she felt "*scared*". A third asked Jenny what her "*intentions were for the audience*". Jenny responded by explaining that her performance was like a "*revenge*" as a result of being in a foreign environment where she had difficulties understanding and communicating with others. She described how she felt "*really happy*" with the effect that her performance produced. Jenny explanation created laughter in the audience.

Reaction to performer 7 (Henry):

No comments were directly made in response to Henry's performance.

4.7.2. Audience discussion after the third set of autobiographical performances

The post-performance discussion was divided into two parts. Firstly, each performer was given their individual tin, containing the audience's comments on 'moment of resonance'[51].

[51] See Appendix 24: Moments of resonance from audience members

They were free to choose, read and comment on what was written on the different slips. Secondly, the performers were invited to ask questions to the audience as a way of starting a dialogue.

Natalia read out a couple of comments and responded by describing how difficult it was for her to talk about her experience, and how "*hard*" it had been to perform. Yet, she also explained how "*powerful*" her performance felt in having enabled her to connect with "*something*" within herself.

Louise chose to read a comment that said, "*binding, escape, break, frustration*". She responded by specifying that her performance "*wasn't specifically about being bound by the past*". She also explained how she had kept a journal since the age of thirteen and had been careful to share the entries that felt "*appropriate*".

Sophie read out a comment that said, "*maturity contrasted with adolescence, the journey of understanding ourselves in the world*". She responded by explaining how it "*summed it up*". She found in the audience's comment a reflection of her "*feelings behind the performance*".

Nathan explained how it felt like "*a treat to go through a pile of comments like that*". He asked clarification from an audience member on something he couldn't properly read on one of the comment slips. A very brief exchange on climate change followed.

Karen read out two comments that said, "*the change and seeing the change*", and "*the power of expression*". She identified with these two comments that summarised her individual process. As she explained to the audience: "*Once I was able to express it, the change could happen*".

Jenny started by apologising to the audience for scaring them in her performance. She read a comment that said, "*be comfortable with it, wear it like you own it. Confidence in knowing*". She responded by describing how grateful she was that many people helped her to settle in a foreign country when it felt "*terrifying*", and thanked the audience for "*bearing the uncomfortable*".

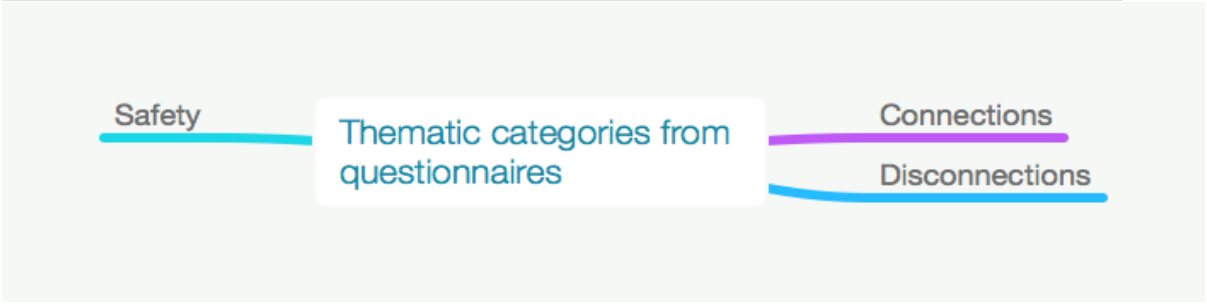
Henry observed that the comments were "*all really nice*". He read out a couple of them that said, "*moments of intimacy*", and "*being defined by illness*". Henry reflected on how he did not want to reveal much about himself in his first two performances but adopted a different approach in his last performance.

Natalia was the only research participant who, in the second part of the discussion, asked a question of the audience about whether they noticed the "*dialogue*" between the different performances, and "*common themes*". Two audience members responded by explaining that the performances "*felt a lot more expressive and a lot more fun*". They explained how the performances "*resonated*" much more deeply as a result of being more personal.

4.7.3. Audience questionnaire

Ten questionnaires were returned at the end of the third performance. The questionnaire was articulated around four different questions[52]. Three main themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the questionnaires, as summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: *Themes emerging from a thematic analysis of the questionnaires*



<u>Theme 1: Connections</u>

Several comments described the performances as '*very moving and inspiring*', '*informative and personal*', '*emotional*' and '*touching*'. Some strong connections were made at different levels. Some comments related to the subject of the performances, such as for instance the theme of illness in Henry's performance. Some identified with the way in which different

[52] See Appendix 25: Audience questionnaire

performances reminded them of '*similar experience*', such as in Louise's. Some described how they '*felt*' for some performers, such as in Jenny's performance. Some commented on how the performances made them '*think about people's stories*'.

A particular comment reflected how the performances helped to feel close to people, and to know their '*feelings*'. Another valued the '*sense of intimacy*' that was experienced as a result of watching the performances. Several comments referred to the act of sharing that they described as '*self-affirming*' and compared to '*a gift*'.

Theme 2: Disconnections

Several comments showed that some audience members found some of the performances difficult to watch. They described some as '*powerful but also uncomfortably intimate*', and some of the content '*quite upsetting and almost invasive*'. Some audience members described how they struggled to find connections with the performances, whilst a particular audience member expressed their dislike of some performances.

Theme 3: Safety

One audience member in particular raised the issue of '*containment*' and '*protection*' of the audience, as they were made to be directly involved in some performances. The same audience member commented on how they chose to be a '*witness and not a participant*'. It was unclear from the questionnaire whether the two issues were related.

4.8. Secondary data

4.8.1. Debrief sessions

Each of the twenty weeks of the performance workshop ended with a short debrief, with the exception of the three performance nights, the three focus group sessions, and two other rehearsals. Each debrief lasted between 5 and 10 minutes. The purpose of the debrief sessions was to give participants an opportunity to reflect on the sessions, to share thoughts and feelings that may have emerged as a result of their participation in the group, and to make

one another aware of possible difficulties. The intention was also for me, as the lead researcher, to provide a safeguarding framework to ensure the well-being and safety of the research participants.

The debrief sessions were not structured around specific questions as was the case for the focus groups. They were offered as an open space for reflection and sharing with no specific agenda other than what the research participants decided to focus on. The content of the debrief sessions largely illustrates the thematic categories of 'support and structure' and 'cohesion' that were identified in the post-project individual interviews and the third focus group. For instance, the establishment of a group contract through visual means in the first session was described as helping to create a "*safe space*". Henry observed in one session that he felt the group offered a "*protective bubble*". Jenny commented in one debrief on a movement exercise, saying that it had "*opened a window*" to help her think about her second performance. Other participants also commented on how they found inspiration in other structured activities in the workshop. Finally, time was also spent thinking about the technical support required for the different performances, and the way in which the participants could help one another.

4.8.2. Online noticeboard

At the beginning of the practice workshop, I created an online noticeboard through the interface platform Lino, to provide an opportunity for the participants to share ideas, thoughts and resources between sessions. The intention was to create an open forum to enable dialogue and exchanges throughout the research process. The access to the forum was password protected and only accessible to the research participants. Unfortunately, the forum was not actively used by the participants. Only the recordings of the debrief sessions were attached to it, as a way for those unable to attend a session to be kept informed of what happened.

4.8.3. Participants' research diaries

In the opening session of the 20-weeks performance workshop, all research participants were given a notebook to encourage them to keep a diary of their individual process throughout the workshop, and to record thoughts, emotions or ideas. Unfortunately, the diaries were very inconsistently used by the research participants. Some of them did not use them at all, some

others chose not to share the content. This resulted in a very small amount of data that are too negligible to include in the analysis.

4.9. Researcher's reflective position

Both methodologies of performance as research and relational-centred phenomenology place great emphasis on the role of the researcher as nodal point in the research process, and in the collection and analysis of data (Richards, 1995; Evans and Finley, 2009). Reflective practice in research critically examines the values and assumptions of the researcher, their location in the research and the overall socio-cultural context, and the effects of their active role in the process of data collection and analysis of the research outcomes (Ritchie et al., 2014). Park Lala & Kinsella (2011) also underline how these different dynamics are being embodied by the researcher throughout the research process, and how the body is a significant vehicle for reflection.

Landy (1996) coined the notion of the 'double life' to describe the concurrent roles of researcher and educator, while Leavy (2009) described the double role of artist and researcher in performance-based methodologies. A similar multiplicity of roles was identified in performance as research by Hadley, who argued about 'the complex position of the researcher as participant, observer and analyst' (Hadley, 2013, p.3). Sajnani also observed the 'multifaceted and interconnected roles of creative arts therapists' (Sajnani, 2012b, p.190) as artist, researcher and therapist, especially in the context of therapeutic performance research practice in dramatherapy (Sajnani, 2013).

In the context of this research, the design shows how I was, from the outset, immersed from a number of different perspectives and viewpoints. One could speak of a *triple life* that incorporates three different roles that dynamically relate to one another throughout the different stages of the research, and that illustrate a particular reflective position. This position encompasses the interrelated roles of researcher, dramatherapist and theatre practitioner as illustrated in Figure 3.

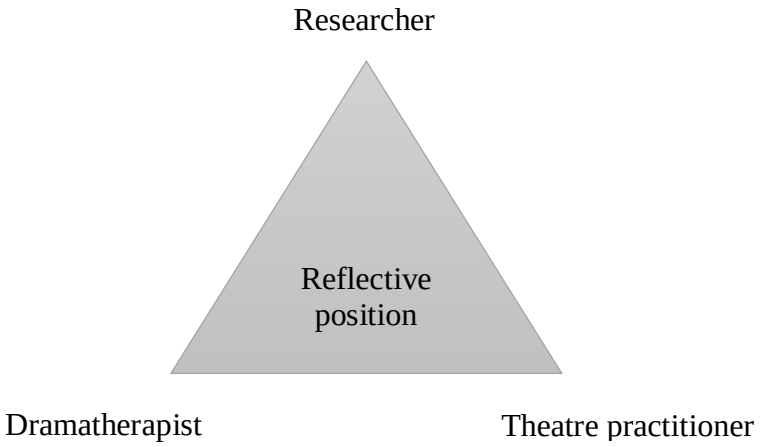


FIGURE3: Researcher's reflective position

I regard these three roles as three sensibilities that I brought to the research, and that impacted on its unfolding and on the production of data:

- the researcher role refers to a position of novice in research motivated to successfully complete a rigorous analysis that would meet the aims of the thesis and the requirements of doctoral study,

- the theatre practitioner role refers to a position of artist with experiences in devising and directing performances, and motivated by a desire for artistic expression and aesthetically effective performances,

- the dramatherapist role refers to a position of experienced and skilled helper with a caring attitude for the wellbeing and personal development of others, motivated by a concern for safe practice and the setting of effective and clear boundaries.

Throughout the research, I kept a reflective diary that considered how these different roles came into play, how they shaped and impacted on the different stages of the research, but also how they were played out in my relationship with the research participants. I found that if these different roles impacted on the way I planned and understood the research, the research itself had a significant effect on how these roles evolved and changed over time. If my initial reflection was discursive in nature, I reflected on ways in which the data collected

from my reflective position could be best presented to capture the dynamic relation between roles, but also to provide an 'expanded understanding' (Russell and Kelly, 2002, p.3) of the phenomenon under investigation in this study.

I reflected on how an arts-based framework, as used in the analysis of the autobiographical performances, could contain and present the data collected through my reflective position. I found that developing an original play could offer a template and container for a performative reflection on my position within the research. I also found that it could enable me to experience myself as an embodied researcher who was physically as well as intellectually engaged in a research process. It therefore gave me an opportunity to think about 'the body as an anchor for self-reflexivity' (Pagis, 2009, p.265), in a similar way to how I envisaged the body as receptacle and communicator of experience and meaning in the context of this research (Merleau-Ponty, 2009).

The play that I developed was aimed at showing the dynamic interrelatedness between the different roles that I adopted throughout the research process. I named the play *Table Reflection*. I performed the play for the first time on the 27th June 2017 at a research day for PhD students in the Music and Performing Arts Department[53] at Anglia Ruskin University, and a second time at a Symposium on Practice as Research in the Performing Arts at the University of Bedfordshire on the 6th June 2018.

I will discuss this performance as a form of embodied and performative reflexivity in greater detail in the following chapter in relation to other findings of the research.

The performance of *Table Reflection* was filmed and is available by accessing the following link: https://vimeo.com/223889720.

4.10. Summary

This chapter has provided an analysis of the different strands of data collected throughout the research and has enabled the identification of a number of preliminary findings. Quite

[53] Known as The School of Performance since September 2018

noticeably, the analysis of each set of data has been presented independently with little cross-reference. The following chapter will specifically consider the way in which the different sets of findings compare and relate to one another, with the view of identifying the final research findings.

CHAPTER 5: JUXTAPOSITION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Structure of chapter:

5.1. Outline

The purpose of this chapter is to continue and complete the analysis of the preliminary findings, and to offer an in-depth and critical discussion of the final findings with the view of answering as comprehensively as possible the research questions.

This second part of the analysis consists in juxtaposing the preliminary findings identified in the previous chapter by making use of an original model of method of data analysis. This

model provides a structure to critically discuss and put in relation to one another the different layers of findings emerging from the multi-method framework of the research.

The chapter starts with an introduction of the model of method of data analysis before identifying the final research findings from the juxtaposition of the different layers of relationality within the model. The critical discussion of the findings directly addresses the research questions in the light of current knowledge in the fields of study discussed in Chapter 2.

The final section of this chapter on participant validation constitutes the final phase of the strategy of analysis as described in the methodology chapter[54]. It presents and discusses the comments made by the research participants on the different stages of the analysis of the research data and on the discussion of the findings.

The limitations and evaluation of the research outcomes will be addressed in the next and final chapter.

5.2. Model of method of data analysis for the juxtaposition of findings

I have created for this research an original model of method of data analysis (Figure 4) that incorporates and juxtaposes the different layers of findings that emerged from the analysis of the different methods of data collection in chapter 4, and that also reflects the multi-methodological framework of the research. This particular model provides a structure for a critical analysis of the different 'layers of relational processes' (Finlay and Evans, 2009, p.127) within and between data, with the view of identifying the final research findings. As previously mentioned, the model constitutes the fifth stage of the strategy of data analysis[55]. A summary of the final research findings follows the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings.

The overall structure of the model weaves together strands of findings in order to enable a critical understanding of the phenomenon under study in this research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Its multi-layered structure is envisaged as an application of the phenomenological

[54] See section 3.4. in Chapter 3: Methodological framework
[55] See section 3.4. in Chapter 3: Methodological framework

method of imaginative variation to 'reveal possible meanings through varying the frames of reference, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles or functions' (Lin, 2013, p.472). It also provides a specific framework for the triangulation of the research findings arising from diverse sources of data (Patton, 1999), with the view of consolidating, cross-examining and cross-validating these findings (Brewer, 2006). This particular type of triangulation juxtaposes methods of data collection and methodological approaches in order to assert the credibility and accuracy of the research outcomes, but also, as Mertens and Hesse-Bibber (2012, p.75) write, 'to seek a more in-depth nuanced understanding of research findings and clarifying disparate results by placing them in dialogue with one another'.

The structure of the model is made of horizontal and vertical axes. The three different horizontal levels represent findings from the different methods of data collection outlined in the research design. The two vertical axes represent a textural and structural analysis of data (Creswell, 2013) that constitutes, as previously outlined, an important aspect of the phenomenological method[56]. These two vertical axes run through the analysis of the three horizontal levels.

[56] see subsection 3.2.2.1. in Chapter 3: Methodological framework

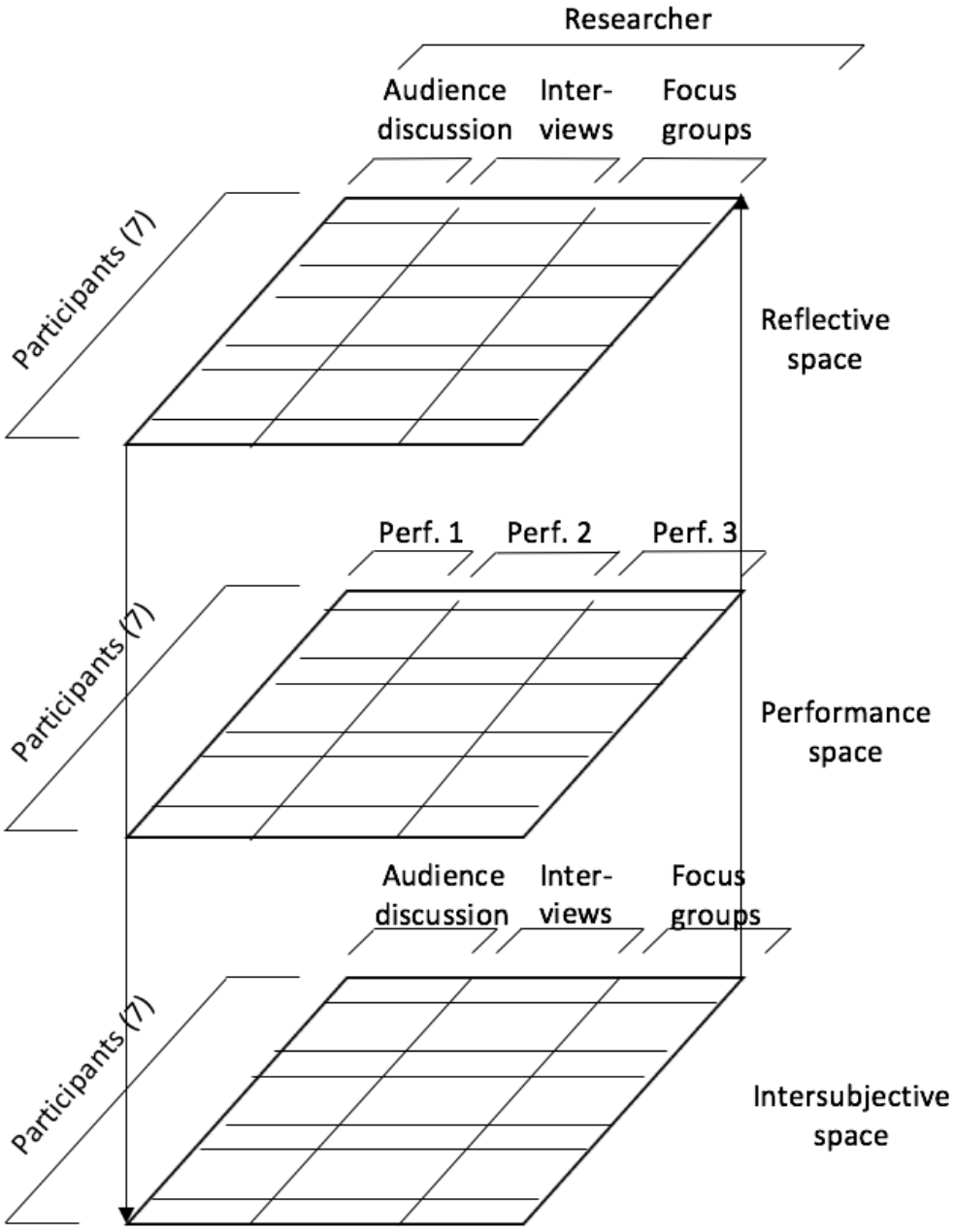


FIGURE 4: Model of method of data analysis for the juxtaposition of findings

<u>Horizontal axes</u>:

- The *intersubjective space* reflects the preliminary findings emerging from the individual post-project interviews, the three focus groups, and the two post-performance discussions with the audience. This level of analysis examines the similarities and differences between these different methods of data collection at different moments of the research process.

- The *performance space* refers to the recording of the different autobiographical performances produced by the research participants throughout the performance workshop. This level of analysis examines the content of the audio-visual output accessible through this thesis[57], and synthesising visual and phenomenological data.

- The *reflective space* reflects the content of my reflective process as researcher actively engaged in the performance workshop and the collection of data. It corresponds to an evaluation of my different positions and roles throughout the research. This level of analysis refers to the content of the reflective performance accessible through this thesis[58].

Vertical axes:

- The textural description, in the language of phenomenology, corresponds to 'what the participants experienced' (Creswell, 2013, p.82). The analysis is referential in terms of reflecting on what that experience was like.

- The structural description, in the language of phenomenology, corresponds to the contextual conditions in which that experience occurs. The analysis is contextual in terms of reflecting on 'the conditions, situations, and context' (ibid., p.80) of the participants' experience.

5.3. Juxtaposition of findings

My intention in this section is to put in relation to one another the preliminary research findings presented in the previous chapter, by making use of the model of method of data analysis explained above. This analysis will be articulated around the different thematic categories that emerged from the phenomenological analysis of the post-project individual interviews and the three focus groups. As suggested for the analysis of the autobiographical performances in the previous chapter, these different categories have been condensed into six main ones:

[57] 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances' available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo
[58] 'Table Reflection reflective performance' available at https://vimeo.com/223889720

- Witnessing (including resonance)
- Being witnessed (by the group and the audience)
- Interpersonal dimension (including dissonance)
- Personal change and meaning
- Artistic choices and process (form and content)
- Risks and safety (including support and structure)

As a reminder, the seven research participants performed in the following order:

Performer 1: Natalia
Performer 2: Louise
Performer 3: Sophie
Performer 4: Nathan
Performer 5: Karen
Performer 6: Jenny
Performer 7: Henry

5.3.1. Witnessing (including resonance)

The thematic category of 'witnessing' reflects how the research participants experienced watching different autobiographical performances devised in the context of the research group, and how they evaluated the impact of these performances on their individual and creative process. This thematic category also includes the category of 'resonance' that emerged from the individual post-project interviews. The analysis of which shows close connections with the process of witnessing.

5.3.1.1. Intersubjective space

The thematic category of 'witnessing' was identified in all three focus groups and in the post-project individual interviews. The thematic category of 'resonance' was only identified in the post-project interviews. The research findings show consistency across methods of data collection although with slight variation between them.

The synthesis of findings across the three focus groups[59] show how the witnessing of autobiographical performances enabled the research participants:

- to find renewed possibilities and windows of opportunities to differently approach, explore and understand their individual autobiographies,
- to find artistic permission and inspiration,
- to take greater risks to perform aspects of their individual experience and to engage in a deeper process of personal disclosure,
- to find the adequate distance from which to explore and perform sensitive personal experiences.

The findings of the post-project individual interviews largely confirm across research participants how witnessing was a catalyst for change, and for the creation of new insights through connection with the performances of others. The findings also show another singular aspect of witnessing that was particularly illustrated in the thematic category of 'resonance' in the post-project interviews. This refers to the role played by the lived body as a locus of experience and perception in the act of witnessing.

These findings particularly show how the witnessing of others enabled the participants to connect with and make visible the other within. In other words, an identification with the performed autobiographies of others created an internal connection and the possibilities for personal transformation.

5.3.1.2. Performance space

The autobiographical performances devised by the research participants throughout the performance workshop show the impact of witnessing on their individual devising process and their autobiographical journey. This is particularly true for six of the seven participants who recognised very clearly the effects of being the witnesses of others performing, as shown in the film accessible through this thesis[60].

[59] This synthesis of findings brings together, in one condensed summary, the findings emerging from the three different focus groups that, up to this point in the analysis, have only been considered in isolation from one another, as detailed in the previous chapter (see subsections 4.5.3, 4.5.5 and 4.5.7.)
[60] Film 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo

The findings of the performances show how most of the research participants became more open, honest, and direct in the way they envisaged and devised their autobiographical performances, as a direct result of watching the performances of others. This is most exemplified in the cases of Natalia[61], Louise[62], Sophie[63], Karen[64] and Henry[65]. The findings also show how witnessing others acted as a key to unlock previously unopened doors, to access latent and unacknowledged autobiographical material, to overcome communication barriers, and to liberate artistic capabilities. As Natalia described it, these possibilities were created and actualised "*through someone else*" [66], indicating that seeing others enabled the research participants to see and become aware of themselves.

The findings also show the role played by the body of the witness in the way the performances were experienced. This is most noticeable in Natalia's, Karen's and Nathan's case. All three participants devised performances that strikingly differed and contrasted with their initial one. It is as if the performances that they witnessed were absorbed and digested by their individual bodies at a subconscious level. This resulted in performances that, in turn, were also largely devised on the use of the body and based on sensory experience. It is also worth noticing that Nathan actively participated in Louise's second performance through a spontaneous and improvised use of movements. This illustrates how witnessing others in the context of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy is not only limited to the act of spectating, but also refers to the effects of an active and embodied engagement in the devising and performances of others.

Finally, the findings emerging from the video recordings of the autobiographical performances of Nathan, Karen and Natalia show how the embodied witnessing of the performing body of others, resulted in performances that were not merely a representation of a particular autobiographical experience or mental state, but also creative of experience and inaugural of unprecedented ways of experiencing oneself.

[61] See 5'35'' into the film
[62] See 17'41'' into the film
[63] See 25'48'' into the film
[64] See 46'41'' into the film
[65] See 1hr 11'53'' into the film
[66] Like in the previous chapter, quotations from research participants will be in italic between double quotation marks. All the words quoted from the research participants are reproduced exactly as they were expressed.

5.3.1.3. Reflective space

The thematic categories of 'witnessing' and 'resonance' largely emerged from the way in which the focus groups and the individual interviews were structured, and from the particular emphasis I placed as researcher on these concepts and processes. As part of a phenomenological analysis of the data, I became particularly aware of how the phenomenological attitude (Finlay, 2014) to research does not solely refer to the way in which a researcher relates to the research participants, but also to the object of the research itself. From the onset of the research, I believed and invested in the concept of witnessing, and how the spectating of others can be a cradle of truth and transformation for the witness. As I wrote in my research diary following the first set of autobiographical performances:

> "*I wonder if I am not "bullying" people into witnessing. I hope that I have sufficiently explained its place within the research. Not entirely sure. Maybe I haven't left enough space in the design for the effects of witnessing to emerge, as opposed to set it as a given. I worry a bit that the design of the research has been created to prove the point that (unconsciously?) I am trying to make. From what I have observed, I think that the participants value the opportunity of devising based on witnessing and resonance. I have to let them explore it as they understand it, not as I want or hope them to*".

My overall reflective position in the research, presented through the reflective performance[67], shows how the anxiety of the researcher role led me to structure and organise the research in quite a controlled manner. This appeared to be also reflected in the way in which I conducted the focus groups and the individual interviews. This role was compensated by the dramatherapist role that showed greater ability to stay with the process and to tolerate uncertainties in the unfolding of the research. At the same time, this dynamic also reflects a significant aspect of artistic research whereby the creative licence given to research participants can produce results that are not always in accordance with the focus of the research. As I wrote in my research diary following the second set of performances:

> "*Some of the performances did not seem to have been created in direct response to witnessing the first set of performances. I struggle to see some of the connections. Maybe these will become clearer at a later stage. Maybe I should not worry too much about it right now. Clearly some of the participants have developed their own understanding of the research, and appear resistant to adhere to its format. But this is what happened. I cannot dismiss these results on the basis that they don't match my expectations*".

[67] Available at https://vimeo.com/223889720

A relational analysis of the data shows how research participants describe and construct their experiences differently depending on the interacting context (Russell and Kelly, 2002) in which these are voiced. In the second focus group for instance, Sophie and Natalia shared some of their frustration and disappointment at not being able to recognise themselves in the second performances of Nathan and Louise, that were supposedly created as a result of witnessing their first ones. Their thoughts and feelings were not without relation to the fact that Nathan and Louise were not present in the focus group. Their absence gave an opportunity to share aspects of experience that appeared more difficult to share when all were present. This was illustrated in the third focus group whose overall tone was one of mutual recognition and consensual acknowledgement. This indicates that the way in which the research participants felt able to talk about their experience of witnessing, was largely affected by how their experienced the different interviews. This shows how, in phenomenological terms, the 'lived human relation' (Adams and van Manen, 2008, p.619) shapes and influences the construction of data, in ways that also determine and limit the understanding of the object of the research.

5.3.1.4. Summary

The findings emerging from the thematic categories of 'witnessing' and 'resonance' reveal important facets of the dynamic relationship between performers and witnesses in the shared space of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy. They show how the performers create significant possibilities for the witnesses as they start to think differently about their own autobiographies. It has to be pointed out that these possibilities were actualised as a result of the design of the research itself that allowed space for a creative exploration of the impact of witnessing the autobiographical performances of others. The findings help understand how the witnessing of autobiographical performances enable the production of personal knowledge gained through the way in which others present themselves in performance. They show how performers and witnesses alike were engaged in a co-created creative process whereby they found in one another ways of accessing and making visible unarticulated parts of their own histories and subjectivities. Equally, the two different methodological approaches used in conjunction in this research significantly highlighted the role played by the lived body in the experience of witnessing. Finally, the findings largely emerged from the way in which the interviews were conducted, and from the particular

configuration of relationships that existed between research participants, as well as between researcher and participants.

5.3.2. Being witnessed (by the group and the audience)

The thematic category of 'being witnessed' refers to the particular experience of devising and performing alongside peer research participants and for an external audience. It also refers to the impact of this process on the participants' individual and creative process. This overall thematic category includes the two sub-categories of 'being witnessed by the group' and 'being witnessed by the audience'.

5.3.2.1. Intersubjective space

The thematic category of 'being witnessed' was identified in the second and third focus groups, and in the post-project individual interviews. The research findings show consistency across methods of data collection.

The findings across the second and third focus groups show three very distinctive responses to the way in which the external audience was experienced following the post-performance discussions at the end of the second and third set of performances. Firstly, for some of the research participants, most notably Jenny and Sophie, the comments of the audience helped clarify the content of their performances, validated and normalised their feelings, and completed their experience of performing by providing a vocabulary for meaning. Secondly, for Karen, Henry but also Sophie (who described two contrasting experiences), the external audience tainted their experience by being critical of their work, and by not recognising what the performances meant to them. Natalia also described how the audience felt like an intrusion that did not add any value to her individual experience of performing. Thirdly, particularly for Nathan, comments from the audience gave him an incentive to try something different in his last performance.

The findings of the post-project individual interviews largely confirm the findings of the focus groups. But the findings also show more specifically the impact of being witnessed by others within the research group. Jenny, particularly, described how the comments that she

received from different witnesses of her work within the group helped her to overcome her anxiety of being watched, and to realise how important the role of the witness was in creating meaning. As she said in her own words, "*it looks like they help me to see myself*". Nathan explained how a comment by Henry in one of the debrief sessions had prompted him to think differently about the devising of his last performance.

5.3.2.2. Performance space

The autobiographical performances devised by the research participants were witnessed by three different types of audiences[68].

The findings of the performances show how some of the research participants found in the performances of others traces of their own autobiographical work as a result of having been witnessed as performers. This was most noticeably the case for Jenny who recognised elements of her own initial performance in Karen's second performance, especially with regards to the difficulties in communicating and understanding others[69]. This was also the case for Karen who recognised in Henry's last performance a particular way of presenting sensitive health issues that was reminiscent of her second performance[70].

The comments of the invited audience as witness to the second set of performances, had a particular impact on Nathan who took into consideration what was shared to inspire the devising of his last performance. The comments shared with the other research participants did not seem to have substantial effects on their last performance.

The written and verbal comments following the last set of performances were suggested as a way of gauging the experience of the audience, and of giving the research participants an opportunity to engage with that experience. These comments were not responded to through artistic means but discussed in the last focus group and the post-project individual interviews.

[68] As outlined in the Performance workshop design in subsection 3.3.5.
[69] See film 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo, 59'00'' into the film
[70] See 50'09'' into the film

5.3.2.3. Reflective space

The thematic category of 'being witnessed' directly emerged from the way in which the interviews were structured. I was very much aware from the onset of the performance workshop that, not solely was I a witness to the creative work of the research participants, but also actively involved in facilitating a group process aimed at enabling the participants to successfully and safely devise a number of autobiographical performances. As I wrote in my research diary at the very early stages of the workshop:

> "*I wonder how much I actually influence the work of the group without wanting to do so, and actually consciously refraining myself from it. I cannot help but think that some of the participants, especially those with a dramatherapy background, engage differently with the research and are more willing to cooperate than others. I can try as hard as I can to be neutral in the research, this will not prevent people to project their own feelings of it onto me. I am not sure how much I can do about that, other than remaining transparent and open about the process and my role*".

My overall reflective position in the research shows how I became aware of the imbalance between my role as facilitator and observer, and the role of the research participants as producers of autobiographical performances. As illustrated in the film of the performances, they are to be seen and I am nowhere to be seen. My dramatherapist role helped me to consider the possible envy and rage that some of the participants might have felt as a result of my privileged position in the group as observer[71]. As I wrote in my research diary following the very last focus group:

> "*I was quite surprised by how much anger and hostility the group expressed towards the audience. I totally understand how unfair and hurtful the critical comments sounded. But it seemed to me that most of the anger was directed at judgements pronounced from the privileged position of not having engaged at all in what was a demanding and intimate process. It is interesting that I was audience to the group for the whole workshop, in the sense that my engagement differed from everybody else. I wonder how much of the anger was actually the expression of how some felt about the group itself without being able to express it*".

The findings indicate that the research participants responded differently to their experience of 'being witnessed by the group' and 'being witnessed by the audience'. The data on the experience of the audience reflects a greater level of tension, than the data on the experience of the group which reflects a general sense of benevolence. Only in the second focus group

[71] See 'Table Reflection reflective performance' available at https://vimeo.com/223889720, 25'33" into the film

were the research participants able to talk more openly about the effects of being witnessed by others in the group.

It is also worth highlighting that the impact of being witnessed by an external audience became most appreciable and tangible through the collection of phenomenological data in the research strategy. This shows the benefits of a multi-method design to analyse and understand underlying processes within the performance data. Finally, the collection of data from the audience at the end of the second and third set of performances was motivated by methodological reasons to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon under study. These data had a profound and detrimental impact on the experience of some of the research participants. This raises ethical issues about the appropriateness of seeking audience feedback immediately after the performances.

5.3.2.4. Summary

If the findings emerging from the thematic category of 'witnessing' reflected the impact of *seeing* others in the context of a group devising autobiographical performances, the findings emerging from the thematic category of 'being witnessed' reveal the impact of *being seen* by others as part of the dynamic relationship between performers and witnesses, and how this informs the meaning making process. The findings of the phenomenological data show how the witnessing by others as audience or group members provided a vocabulary to scaffold experience and feelings, as well as an incentive to engage differently with autobiographical material. Nonetheless, the findings also reveal how the critical comments expressed by some of the external audience undermined the performances of some of the research participants, and the way in which they felt recognised (or not). Lastly, different methods of data collection and a phenomenological analysis of the data have particularly helped to understand the impact of 'being witnessed' on the experience of the participants, and on the production of autobiographical performances.

5.3.3. Interpersonal dimension (including dissonance)

The thematic category of 'interpersonal dimension' refers to the nature of interpersonal relationships within the research group, and how this impacted on the experience of the

individual participants and on their creative process. This thematic category also includes 'dissonance' that emerged from the individual post-project interviews, and whose analysis reveals aspects of interpersonal dynamics within the research group.

5.3.3.1. Intersubjective space

The thematic category of 'interpersonal dimension' was identified in the first and third focus groups, and in the post-project individual interviews. The thematic category of 'dissonance' was only identified in the post-project interviews. The research findings show consistency across methods of data collection.

The findings across the first and third focus groups show the significant impact of the exchanges between research participants on the creation and devising of their autobiographical performances. The findings show how participants reflected differently on their experience of the larger group and of the two small working groups. They generally found it easier to share their experience of their small groups which were described as important spaces for discussion, exchange of ideas, feedback, and support.

The findings of the post-project individual interviews largely confirm that interactions within the whole group and the two small groups were instrumental to the engagement of the participants in the research. Some of the participants appeared to be more comfortable in the larger group, when others appeared more at ease in their small group. Generally speaking, the small group of Sophie, Jenny and Henry appeared more cohesive than the other group of Karen, Louise, Natalia and Nathan. The findings also show that pre-existing relationships between some of the research participants created a very complex configuration of interactions that determined the way in which they engaged with one another, and the course of their creative process.

The findings of the phenomenological data show how the participants generally felt supported and accepted by one another. But the findings under the thematic category of 'dissonance' also reveal frustration and friction within the group, although shared with great caution.

5.3.3.2. Performance space

The autobiographical performances created by the research participants do not show very clearly the impact and influence of interpersonal dynamics within the group on the devising process. This is largely due to the fact that the video recording of the performances does not show the process leading to their creation, but rather reflects an outcome whose causation remain largely speculative and unseen. Nevertheless, some of the performances appear to have been instigated by pre-existing relationships between research participants. This was particularly illustrated in the process leading to the devising of the second set of performances whereby participants were invited to choose one or two of the initial performances they found a particular resonance with. Louise and Henry, who were friends prior to their engagement in the research, chose each other's first performance. Sophie, Karen and Jenny, who all were past or current dramatherapy students, also chose performances devised by one of them.

5.3.3.3. Reflective space

As in the previous categories, the thematic categories of 'interpersonal dimension' and 'dissonance' emerged from the way in which the interviews were structured. From the beginning of the performance workshop, I was aware that pre-existing relationships between some of the research participants could have a significant effect on their engagement. Equally, I was also aware of a past teaching relationship between myself and the graduated and trainee dramatherapists in the research group. I also wondered how much of these pre-existing and special relationships may have contributed to a number of participants dropping out in the very first few weeks. In Jane's case, it was clear that her withdrawal was explained by a boundary issue between her role as lecturer and her role as participant. Throughout the workshop, I observed and experienced from my position as facilitator, a number of tensions within the group that remained largely as undercurrents. As I wrote in the script of the reflective performance from the position of the dramatherapist role:

> "*I sensed tension between participants, avoidance to engage with personal material, resistance to share and show, and anger as the ending approached. I found the group sometimes difficult to manage as my authority was undermined and challenged by some on certain occasions. I was also aware of sub-grouping and pairing as some of the participants knew each other before joining the group. Absences were also an issue as only one of the participants attended all of the sessions. I made use of my*

> *skills to reflect on these group issues, but also to provide a space for the participants to reflect on them*".

The findings show that the data were largely the result of how the research participants felt able to relate to one another, and to reflect on sensitive interpersonal issues that emerged in the group. As shown in the last thematic category, the third focus group was characterised by a significant expression of anger and frustration that was primarily directed towards the external audience. If some of this anger was expressed in direct response to the comments of some audience members, it might also have been the projection of difficult feelings within the group itself. It was as if the participants were protecting the group and the research against the fantasy of a collapse if they were totally honest with one another. If the tone of the focus groups was generally consensual, accommodating and courteous, the findings of the individual interviews showed greater openness about the way in which the participants experienced one another. Still, this was expressed with a great amount of caution by either not naming the research participant with whom there was a conflict, or by choosing words very carefully.

5.3.3.4. Summary

The findings emerging from the thematic categories of 'interpersonal dimension' show how the production of autobiographical performances and their meaning is largely the expression of complex relational configurations. The findings also reveal that this particular dimension of the participants' experience in the research is not so well reflected in the performances. It required a different type of data to understand it in all its complexity. Once more, as in the two previous thematic categories, the performance data were usefully completed by the phenomenological data to help understand underlying processes. In addition, the findings show that the participants found it generally quite difficult to discuss experiences of tension and dissonance within the group. This became more explicit through the individual post-project interviews whereby the participants shared their experience less cautiously, but also reflected on the contrast between their experience of the larger group and of the two small groups.

5.3.4. Personal change and meaning

The thematic category of 'personal change and meaning' refers to how the research participants experienced change following the production of autobiographical performances within the research design, and how they evaluated the meaningfulness of that change.

5.3.4.1. Intersubjective space

The thematic category of 'personal change and meaning' was identified in the second focus group and in the post-project individual interviews. The research findings show consistency across methods of data collection.

The findings of the second focus group reveal the type of change that the research participants experienced following their second autobiographical performance. Change was described in terms of feeling more in control, being more open to others, gaining in confidence, feeling more playful, and developing new personal awareness. The findings of the post-project interviews gave a more comprehensive picture of how change was experienced by the participants. The findings show a distinction between research participants who felt able to identify and reflect on change, and those who found it more difficult. As described in chapter 4[72], Nathan and Natalia found it particularly difficult to verbalise change due to their performances being the expression of embodied and physical sensations that words fell short to describe.

For others, change and its meaning were much more tangible and the product of particular processes. For Jenny, Sophie and Louise, change largely resulted from the feedback they received from fellow participants in the research group and from the external audience. Jenny, for instance, was able to recognise and clarify the nature of her feelings with regards to living in a foreign country, but also to understand that performance is a powerful way of communication, capable of transcending cultural barriers. The meaning of their performances was shaped and actualised through the interactions with others within the research group. As Sophie summarised it,

[72] See Theme 6: Personal change and meaning in subsection 4.4.3. Composite summary of findings for the individual post-project interviews

> "*Through receiving the feedback from others, it gave me meaning to my performance, and I thought yes that's it, that's what I meant, but I didn't recognise that at the time*".

For Karen and Henry, the changes in their performances were largely the result of watching the performances of others. The meaning emerged from the act of performing as it provided a language for their experience and helped them realise the significance of personal health issues.

5.3.4.2. Performance space

The three different autobiographical performances devised by each of the research participants are characterised by noticeable differences. The changes between performances can be summarised as follows:

from	controlled	*to*	experiential
	closed		open
	safe / guarded		exposed
	distanced	⟶	owned
	narrated		embodied
	estrangement		acceptance

As shown in the film, these changes are reflected in all of the participants' performances, although to varying degrees. Natalia's performances show how she became more experimental (especially her second one), and how she owned and embodied her own story in her last performance[73]. Louise's performances show how she became more open, how she overcame her isolation, and immersed the audience in her story[74]. Sophie's performances show how she released some self-control, became freer in the way she expressed herself, and made use of her own voice as a way of owning her embodied self[75]. Nathan's performances show how he became more innovative and less constricted through the use of movements[76]. Karen's performances show how she found the means to share her experience of a personal

[73] See film 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo, 6'57'' and 10'57'' into the film
[74] See 21'18'' into the film
[75] See 32'44'' into the film
[76] See 42'34'' into the film

long-term health issue and embodied the changes that she hoped for[77]. Jenny's performances show how she gained a better understanding of her feelings of living in a different cultural and linguistic environment[78]. Henry's performance show how he became more open by revealing the impact of chronic health issues on his life[79].

5.3.4.3. Reflective space

The thematic category of 'personal change and meaning' largely emerged from the way in which the different interviews were structured, with the conscious aim of gathering data that would help answer the research questions.

The findings show that the meaning of the change that the research participants described was notably created in the different reflective spaces within the research. This is, for instance, illustrated in the way in which Jenny gained some valuable insight in the discussion with the audience that helped to name the feelings conveyed through her performances. Sophie also described how the meaning of her performances was context-dependent, as the different spaces in which her experience was shared brought different meanings to it. This includes the particular way in which we talked about her experience in the post-project interview:

> "*Even talking about it now I think the meaning has already changed, and I recognize new things. I guess I'm talking about it in a different way*".

As part of my researcher role, I was curious about the changes that the participants experienced as a result of their involvement in the research, and how meaningful these changes were for them[80]. At the same time, this represented significant challenges with regards to my position as phenomenological researcher that required open presence (Finlay, 2009a) and the upholding of the epoché (Willig, 2008). As I wrote in my research diary following the post-project individual interviews,

> "*As much as I tried to put aside my own understanding of the participants' experience, I found it quite hard to accept the way in which some of the participants talked about their experience without prodding them further. This was particularly the case for Nathan who did not find his last performance particularly meaningful, when I actually saw something in it that seemed to make it quite meaningful. After all,*

[77] See 48'25" into the film
[78] See 1hr 06'04'' into the film
[79] See 1hr 13'11'' into the film
[80] See 'Table Reflection reflective performance' available at https://vimeo.com/223889720, 18'15" into the film

I was an active observer in the research. I shared the experience of the participants from the onset of the workshop. I saw things that they may not have been aware of themselves, and vice versa. I am concerned that I might have been too forceful sometimes (and Nathan certainly found some of my interventions quite abstract). But at the same time, my interaction with him in the interview illustrates how we both became co-producers of the meaning of his experience".

5.3.4.4. Summary

The findings emerging from the thematic categories of 'personal change and meaning' show how the change experienced by the research participants was largely the product of processes that have been highlighted in previous thematic categories. This shows an overlapping of key processes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the way in which meaning is produced in autobiographical performance. The findings show how, for some of the participants, change occurred as a direct result of witnessing or being witnessed by others (especially by the external audience). For some others, the findings show how change resulted from interactions and exchanges within the research group. Findings also show how the meaning of that change was more difficult to verbalise for some of the research participants. This indicates how the lived body is a vessel and conveyor of meaning, as it has already been alluded to in the witnessing process. Finally, the findings show how the production of meaning in autobiographical performance is also the result of the way in which the participants reflected on their experience within different relational contexts, including the interviews with myself as researcher.

5.3.5. Artistic choices and process (form and content)

The thematic category of 'artistic choices and process' refers to the way in which the research participants experienced the progression between their different performances, and to the factors contributing to that progression. This thematic category also includes the category of 'form, content and process' that emerged from the second focus group, and that largely describes similar experiences.

5.3.5.1. Intersubjective space

The thematic category of 'artistic choices and process' was identified in the first and second focus groups (under the category 'form, content and process'), and in the post-project individual interviews. The research findings show consistency across methods of data collection.

The findings across the first and second focus groups show how the research participants negotiated the relation between the form and the content of their autobiographical performances over time. The findings reveal how the choices made by the participants with regards to the aesthetics and the content of their initial performances, generally reflected a need for distance, supported by the use of metaphors and pre-recorded voices. In contrast, their second performances were characterised by a style and content that reflected playfulness, experimentation and an openness to the unknown.

The findings of the post-project interviews[81] gave a more comprehensive account of the way in which the participants experienced the progression between their different performances. The findings show how the different autobiographical performances followed a particular progression that reflected artistic choices that changed over time.

5.3.5.2. Performance space

The three autobiographical performances devised by the research participants show a clear progression and variation in form and content. Although this progression is noticeable in all of the performances, some of them show significant differences in aesthetics rather than in content. This is the case for the performances of Natalia, Sophie and Nathan. If Natalia told the same story in her first and third performance, she performed it very differently by making herself more visible and by bringing the audience close to herself. Her second performance enabled that transition by immersing the audience in an experiential, participatory and sensory experience[82]. Sophie also told in her third performance a story very similar to the first one with the distinctive addition of bringing live singing into it, as a way of showing

[81] As summarised in Theme 7: Artistic choices and process in subsection 4.4.4. Synthesis of findings for the individual post-project interviews

[82] See film 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo, 6'25'' into the film

how she had reclaimed her own voice[83]. Nathan explored throughout his performances a similar theme of personal significance, but noticeably differently. His last performance was non-verbal and purely based on movements, whilst also involving an invitation to audience members to join him on stage. His initial two performances were notably characterised by stillness and an exclusive use of words[84].

Other performances show notable variation in content, as opposed to form. This was the case for the performances of Henry, Louise and Jenny. Henry's last performance revealed the impact of chronic health issues on his life, whereas his first performance described his first year at university. His second performance marked a transition characterised by a desire to "*break out of a cycle*"[85]. Louise's last performances also showed greater openness than previous ones. Although she was very physically engaged in her three performances, her last one showed a level of personal disclosure that was less controlled than in previous ones[86]. Jenny maintained throughout her different performances a very similar style that was based on physicality, and that summoned a direct involvement of the audience. Her last performance represented a breakthrough as she found the means to break the bonds that prevented her from understanding herself and others[87].

Finally, the progression between the performances of Karen show changes in form and content. These reflect the way in which her three performances were the expression of an unfolding process. Karen's second performance shows how she found a dramatic language to represent and communicate her experience of dyslexia. Her second performance is in sharp contrast with the form and the content of her initial one. Her last performance represents an exhortation to others to fight negative thoughts, and to join her in the call: "*Yes, I can!*". She invited the audience on stage as a way of showing how she let others enter and share her own internal space[88].

[83] See 32'14'' into the film
[84] See 40'19'' into the film
[85] See 1hr 09'38'' into the film
[86] See 18'06'' into the film
[87] See 1hr 04'22'' into the film
[88] See 53'12'' into the film

5.3.5.3. Reflective space

The thematic category of 'artistic choices and process' emerged from the way in which the different interviews were structured, as I was particularly interested as a researcher to understand how the participants negotiated the transition between their different performances, and what factors contributed to it.

The reflective performance reveals a tension between the two concomitant roles of researcher and theatre practitioner. If the researcher role was primarily motivated by carrying out a rigorous doctoral study, the theatre practitioner role was concerned with the quality of the devising process and by the aesthetics of the different performances. As I wrote in the script of the reflective performance from the perspective of the theatre practitioner role:

> "*I am as much interested in what the performances are about as I am interested in how they are performed. I suggested at the beginning of the practice workshop a step by step approach that I previously used, to support the devising process. I soon realised that the participants for most of them were quite happy to follow their own process. After all they all had previous experience in performing. I guided them through a number of activities to enable different kinds of qualitative engagement with their own stories and the stories of others. I suggested exercises based on the use of the body, movement and sound. Some of the participants found these structures very helpful as they activated creative ideas. But I had to let go of a directing role because this was simply not what I was there for*".

The findings indicate that the research participants did not experience the intrusion of the desires of my role as theatre practitioner, but rather related favourably to the creative structure provided by my role as researcher.

5.3.5.4. Summary

The findings emerging from the thematic categories of 'artistic choices and process' show that the differences in form and content between the autobiographical performances, resulted from complex intertwined aesthetic and relational dynamics within the research group. These enabled the participants to gradually devise performances that contained liberating and transformative expressive possibilities. As already highlighted in findings from previous thematic categories, the phenomenological data provided ways of clarifying how the

transition between the different autobiographical performances in their form and content were negotiated by each of the research participants.

5.3.6. Risks and safety (including support and structure)

The thematic category of 'risks and safety' refers to the way in which the research participants felt able to take and manage risks with regards to exploring and devising autobiographical performances, and the factors supporting a sense of safety within the group. This thematic category also includes the category of 'support and structure' which largely reflects similar processes.

5.3.6.1. Intersubjective space

The thematic categories of 'risks and safety' and 'support and structure' were mainly identified in the post-project individual interviews and to a lesser extent in the third focus group. They were also recurrent themes in the debrief sessions. The research findings show consistency across methods of data collection.

The findings of the third focus group show a sense of cohesiveness within the research group, and of mutual appreciation between research participants. They show a general agreement on the instrumentality of the structure of the workshop to facilitate a safe engagement with autobiographical material. Natalia gave the following description that was shared by other participants:

> "*For me, what helped me achieve was the process, was the way our sessions were structured. The way that we were encouraged to relate to each other, the way that we had the opportunity to look within ourselves. It was the whole process of coming together, setting the session, having to come here every week, it was everything about it that, that did it for me. The whole journey*".

The content of the debrief sessions largely confirms how a number of structured activities helped the creation of a safe and protective space within the research group. The findings of the post-project individual interviews[89] confirm how a sense of support and containment

[89] See Theme 8: Risks and safety and Theme 9: Support and structure in subsection 4.4.3. Composite summary of findings for the individual post-project interviews

within the research group helped the research participants to become more open, and to take greater risks in the disclosure and performance of autobiographical material. The findings also show how, for some, the structured group activities throughout the workshop triggered ideas that supported the devising process.

5.3.6.2. Performance space

The autobiographical performances show perceptible changes that reflect a greater level of risks with regards to the disclosure and presentation of autobiographical material. This was most noticeably the case in the last performances of Louise, Sophie and Henry, and in the second performance of Karen. If their initial performances appeared initially guarded, contained and controlled, their subsequent performances appeared more personal and exposing, and therefore reflecting greater risk taking.

In her last performance, Louise "*let it out all there*" as she surrounded herself with personal photographs and diary entries that audience members were free to rummage through and look at. Sophie made an active use of her singing voice in her last performance, which was something she had never done before in a performance context. Henry removed layers of self-protection in his last performance by being open about his health and its impact on his life. Karen also took a significant risk by talking openly about her dyslexia in her second performance, a sensitive issue that she was still "*struggling with*".

5.3.6.3. Reflective space

The thematic category of 'risks and safety' emerged from the way in which the participants talked about their experience of the research group. Although I carefully devised the performance workshop to ensure the safe exploration of personal material through performance, I did not anticipate that its structure and design, as well as the level of support within the group, would be deliberately identified by all the participants as particularly important to the nature of their engagement and their sense of safety.

My reflective position in the research shows how I was mainly guided in this process by my role as dramatherapist, and my experience in facilitating groups in clinical and non-clinical settings. As I wrote in my research diary following the very last focus group:

> "*I can really appreciate how the dramatherapy structure of the research helped the safe engagement of the participants and enabled them to take greater risks. It appears clear that the structure significantly contributed to the creation of performances that were more honest and meaningful in terms of carrying useful insights or enabling the participants to connect with disowned parts of their own self. This makes me wonder about the role of the dramatherapy structure in the process of co-creation. It could very well be that it constitutes an essential and foundational condition for an authentic process of co-creation to emerge*".

The findings also indicate that if the research participants felt safe and protected within the group, they equally felt protective of the group. The overall amenable tone of the last focus group showed the attachment of the research participants to the group, but also the possible unconscious desire to defend against tension and conflicting experience.

It is also worth highlighting that the data collected from the audience through the questionnaire at the end of the third performance, showed how some of the performances were experienced as "*uncomfortably intimate*", and how one particular audience member raised the issue of "*containment*" and "*protection*". Although these findings only reflect the experience of a very small audience, they nevertheless raise issues about the exposure of the audience to displeasing performances and about the ethics of spectatorship (Fitzpatrick, 2011) in autobiographical performance.

Finally, the findings also show, as in previous thematic categories, that the understanding of how risks and safety were managed and negotiated within the research group, were made clearer and explicit through the collection of phenomenological data. This confirms the benefits of a multi-method design within this research to dispel possible assumptions regarding the performance data and provide a deeper understanding of underlying processes.

5.3.6.4. Summary

The findings emerging from the thematic categories of 'risks and safety' and 'support and structure' reveal the significant impact of the dramatherapy structure on the engagement of the research participants and the management of personal risks. If previous findings linked risk taking to the 'witnessing' process and the 'interpersonal dimension' within the research group, these particular findings highlight the way in which the structure of the workshop provided a containment and holding for the safe participation of those involved. The findings

therefore suggest how a process of co-creation of meaning within a group requires certain pre-existing conditions to emerge. The findings also highlight how autobiographical performances may be risky for audience members, and how to ensure their safety. Finally, as in previous thematic categories, the findings show how the collection of phenomenological data help to better understand and clarify the intentions and choices of the individual participants with regards to the possible risks contained in their different performances.

5.4. Summary of the final findings

The analysis of the juxtaposition of the preliminary findings has enabled to identify ten significant and final research findings. These can be summarised as follows:

1. The process of witnessing autobiographical performances enlarges the space of the possible for the witness and enables access to the exploration of latent and unacknowledged autobiographical material.

2. The process of witnessing liberates creative, artistic and aesthetic capacities, and encourages risk taking with regards to engaging in a deeper process of personal exploration with transformative effects.

3. The process of witnessing enables the connection with oneself through the connection and identification with the performed experience of others. That personal connection is regulated through aesthetic distance that creates opportunities for awareness, knowledge and change.

4. Being witnessed by others as performer provides a vocabulary to understand experience and affects, and to actualise meaning.

5. Being witnessed by others as performer has validating and invalidating effects that reflect the way in which one feels recognised (or not) by others.

6. The body plays an important role in the dynamic between performer and witness in autobiographical performance. This reflects a process in which the body experiences itself as a result of witnessing, perceiving and engaging with others.

7. The role of the lived body in the act of witnessing in autobiographical performance creates possibilities to engage with one's own body as a performer. The performing body of the performer actively enables the production of embodied knowledge and meaning.

8. The interpersonal relationships between participants within the research group significantly contributed to their individual engagement, their creative process, and to the production of knowledge and meaning.

9. The meaning and knowledge created through the research group were context and relationship dependent.

10. The dramatherapy structure of the workshop, the mutual support and the sense of safety within the research group were essential conditions for a process of co-creation to emerge.

5.5. Discussion of findings

I intend to give in this section a rich, critical and in-depth discussion of the juxtaposition of findings with the view of answering as fully and comprehensively as possible the research questions identified in this study. The discussion will, as Sajnani (2015, p.108) suggests, 'relate and discuss the results of the inquiry to previous findings', as well as theoretical concepts, approaches and examples of practice that were reviewed in the chapter on the context of the research, and that reflect its interdisciplinary nature. The discussion will also discuss the final findings in the context of the epistemological and methodological frameworks of the research.

I start the discussion with a reminder of the research questions. Each of the questions will be examined in turn in the following subsections.

5.5.1. Research questions

1. How might we describe and understand the way in which meaning emerges from relational and embodied processes within a group devising, performing and witnessing autobiographical performances?

2. How might we describe and understand the dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness in the shared space of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, and the way in which it informs the meaning making process?

3. How might we describe and understand the process of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy?

5.5.2. Relational and embodied processes

Research question 1: How might we describe and understand the way in which meaning emerges from relational and embodied processes within a group devising, performing and witnessing autobiographical performances?

The findings of the research have shown the significance of interpersonal and intersubjective relationships within the performance workshop on the experience of the research participants as performers and witnesses, on the production of their different autobiographical performances, and on the way in which they constructed meaning. The findings have therefore highlighted complex relational dynamics and configurations within the shared space of the performance workshop and their impact on the meaning making process. This is particularly reflected in the final findings 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10[90].

[90] See above section 5.4.

The findings that showed the significance of relational and embodied processes became explicit in the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings for the thematic categories of 'being witnessed (by the group and the audience)'[91], 'interpersonal dimension (including dissonance)'[92], 'personal change and meaning'[93], and 'risks and safety (including support and structure)'[94].

This analysis has shown how meaning emerged from multiple configurations of relationships and interactions within the research. It has therefore provided a detailed description of the relational dynamics at play in the production of autobiographical performances and their meaning. As such, it addresses one of the gaps in research in autobiographical performance that was identified in the review of the literature in dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies, and that referred to the lack of empirical data describing the relational dynamics at play in the production of autobiographical performance, and their impact on the meaning making process for those involved[95]. The findings of this research provide therefore a significant contribution to the understanding of autobiographical performance as a 'co-constructed dynamic system' (Sajnani, 2016, p.89) for both fields of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies.

Figure 5 below provides a visual representation that describes the different 'degrees of relationality' (Grace, 2006, p.72) in the production of autobiographical performance as shown in the analysis of findings. It helps understand how the production of meaning in autobiographical performance emerges from the relationship between these different layers.

[91] See above subsection 5.3.2.
[92] See above subsection 5.3.3.
[93] See above subsection 5.3.4.
[94] See above subsection 5.3.6.
[95] See point 3) section 2.4. in Chapter 2

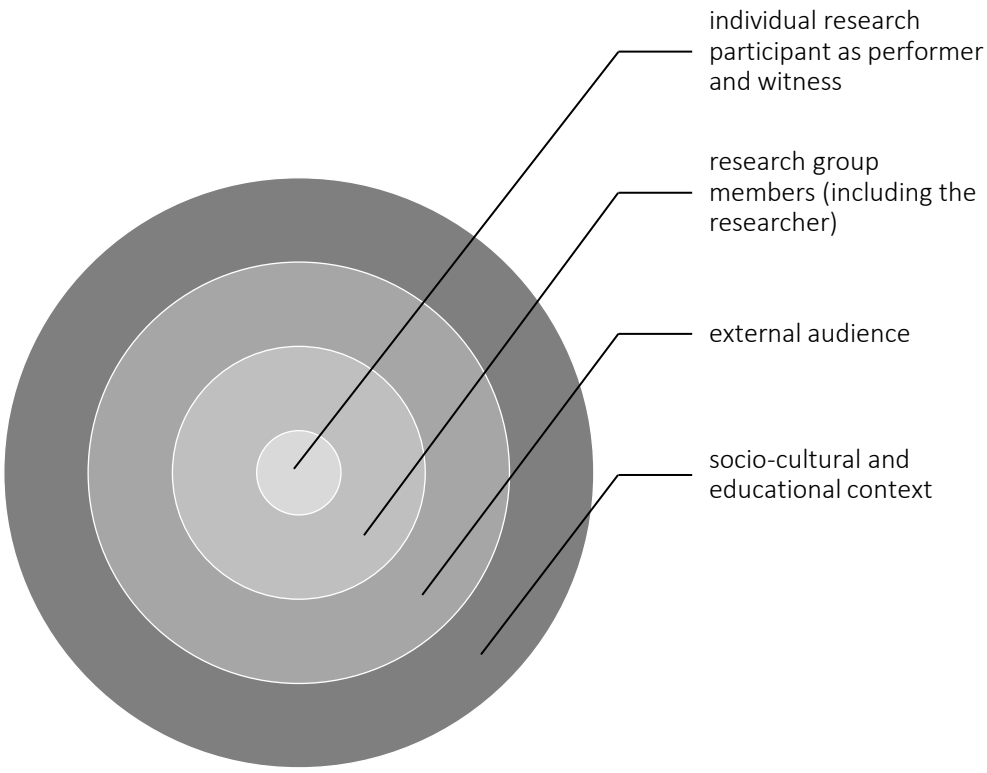


FIGURE 5: Layers of relationality in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy

The concentric circles in Figure 5 represents the different constituents of the 'narrative event' (Langellier, 1999, p.131) that is autobiographical performance:

- the central circle refers to the individual research participants as producers and performers of their own autobiographical performances, but also as witnesses of the performances of others in the research group, and sometimes as participants in these performances,

- the second circle refers to the research group including myself from three different viewpoints as researcher, dramatherapist and theatre practitioner[96]. It also refers to the two smaller groups in which the research participants devised their performances[97],

- the third circle refers to the external audience that was invited to attend the second and third set of autobiographical performances[98],

[96] See section 4.9. Researcher's reflective position in Chapter 4
[97] See section 4.3. The research group and allocation to two working groups in Chapter 4
[98] See subsection 3.3.5. Performance workshop design in Chapter 3

- the fourth and external circle refers the socio-cultural context of the research and of the research participants. It also refers to the educational context in which the research participants were recruited, and in which the doctoral study was carried out.

The analysis of the juxtaposition of findings has provided a unique and detailed description of the impact of relational dynamics on the devising of autobiographical performances and on their meaning. If several authors in the field of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies noted the significance of these dynamics in the process of creation of autobiographical performances (Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez, 2014; Dokter and Gersie, 2016; Sajnani, 2016; Grace, 2006; Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007; Park-Fuller, 2000), this study has provided an analysis that illustrates how these performances can be understood as 'theatres of self-in-relation' (Dokter and Gersie, 2016, p.183) whereby knowledge and meaning are constructed in relation to others. It has also provided some research underpinnings to the role of 'authorizing agents' (Sajnani, 2016, p.88) in the production of autobiographical performance that question the notion of agency of the sole performer (Heddon, 2013). These refer to the position and role of the witnessing spectator in autobiographical performance, but also to other significant audiences as described in Figure 5. The findings inform a better understanding of the impact and active role of different witnessing audiences in the creation of autobiographical performances and of their meaning. As such, they have interdisciplinary implications by bringing to the field of dramatherapy greater awareness of the authoring role of different audiences in the process of devising and performing autobiographical performance, whilst they bring to the field of theatre and performance studies a greater emphasis on the complexity of the witnessing process, not solely characteristic of the interactions between performer and spectator.

The analysis from the juxtaposition of findings has enabled the identification of three main configurations of interactions between the different layers in Figure 5:

- the relationship between the individual participants and the research group (including the researcher)
- the relationship between the individual participants and the external audience
- the relationship between the individual participants and the research context

I will examine these separately to understand the different ways in which meaning emerged from relational and embodied processes within the research.

5.5.2.1. Relationship between the individual participants and the research group (including the researcher)

I first discuss the different types of interactions within the group and their impact on the expression of affects and on the meaning making process for the individual participants. I then consider the interactions with myself as researcher, and the effects of my different roles as researcher, dramatherapist and theatre practitioner on the production of autobiographical performances and on the experience of the individual participants.

There was a general agreement between research participants that the interactions within the whole group and the two smaller groups were instrumental to their engagement in the research and to the way in which they made sense of their experience. This was particularly the case for Jenny, Sophie, Louise, Nathan and Natalia. For Jenny, most notably, her interactions with others, especially within her smaller group, completed her experience as a performer by providing a vocabulary to better understand the emotions conveyed through her performances. As she said about the feedback received from others: "*they helped me to see myself*"[99]. Jenny's example illustrates how her capacity to understand herself and to create knowledge was a direct expression of interpersonal relationships and communicative processes within the group. It also illustrates how being witnessed by others within the group significantly contributed to the way in which she was able to understand her individual performances, and to develop subsequent ones. Jenny's experience shows how intersubjective relationships within a group working on the production of autobiographical performances create, as Tronick (1998) suggested, expanded states of consciousness, and account for the formation of new awareness and understanding that contribute to a process of personal integration. Besides, Jenny's experience also shows how the interpersonal exchanges within her group significantly contributed to the dissolution of the cultural and language barriers that her initial performance was metaphorically portraying.

[99] From the post-project individual interview

Natalia's first performance illustrates how the interactions within her small group helped her to actualise the lived experience that she was hoping to explore and work on when she joined the research project. Her individual process echoes the way in which Pendzik compared the group work leading to the devising of autobiographical performance to 'midwifery', whereby the participants, through their mutual involvement, helped 'bring forth and deliver a final product' (Pendzik, 2013, p.6). Natalia used a similar metaphor to describe how the members of her small group became the "*midwives and nurses*" that enabled the safe delivery of her idea. She reflected on how the interactions with others in her small group were "*the route to the meaning*" of her performance.

Nathan provides another example of the effects of interpersonal relationships within the research group on the production of his performances. Nathan explained how one of Henry's comments in one of the debrief sessions "*pushed*" him to try something different in his last performance. This resulted in a performance that was in sharp contrast with the other two by being purely non-verbal and based on movements.

The examples of Jenny, Natalia and Nathan illustrate three distinct responses to the effects of interpersonal relationships between the individual participants and the research group on the production of autobiographical performances and their meaning. They particularly show, in ways that the literature had not previously considered, the effects of 'otherness' (Johnson, 2016, p.73) in autobiographical performance on the scaffolding and understanding of affects, on the actualisation of lived experience, and on the choice of the material for performance.

With regard to the effects of the interactions between myself as researcher and the participants, my position in the research was in sharp contrast with the expectations placed on them. My privileged position as facilitator and non-performer created a manifest power imbalance that was an integral part to the structure of interactions within the research group. The particular design of the research put me in a position of unequal partner in relation to the research participants. This reflected how, as Pendzik observed, the facilitator/researcher in autobiographical performance 'is never an equal co-creator' (Pendzik, 2013, p.7). Despite ethical safeguards[100] and my efforts to remain transparent and open, as shown in my personal reflective process[101], my particular role in the group evoked feelings that found an expression

[100] See section 3.3.3. Ethical Framework in Chapter 3
[101] See especially subsection 5.3.2.3. above

in the way the research participants engaged in the group and devised their performances. Some of the resistances experienced in the group may have been an illustration of this, as might have been some of the anger and frustration that the research participants expressed in the last focus group in response to members of the audience who did not engage with the performances or were critical of them.

Besides, my relationship to the research participants was not equal as I knew three of them prior to the research in different capacities as dramatherapy lecturer (Sophie, Karen and Jenny)[102] and placement manager (Sophie). Although I remained mindful to relate equally to all in the research group, this introduced a divide between those invested in the field of dramatherapy and those who were not. As indicated in the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings for the thematic category of 'interpersonal dimension'[103], this was not the only instance of pre-existing relationships within the research group. Amongst the ten participants who initially joined the research, Henry, Louise and Tania were students on the same undergraduate course. Jane was one of their tutors and chose to withdraw from the workshop because of a boundary issue. Karen, Sophie and Jenny had a connection with the dramatherapy department at ARU as current or past students. Natalia and Jane were both doctoral students. These particular interpersonal dynamics appeared to have an impact on the engagement of the research participants and on the way in which they devised their performances. This was most notably illustrated in the way in which Sophie, Karen, Jenny, Henry and Louise devised their second performance based on a connection with the initial performance of someone they already knew in the group. The analysis of the findings also revealed underlying tension, friction and dissonance within the research group that was not openly acknowledged but that, nevertheless, found an expression in the way some of the participants devised their performances. This was, for instance, the case for Henry who devised a much more open and intimate last performance in direct response to the attitude of another participant, who, he felt, was not working from personal material.

With regard to the effects of my different roles as researcher, dramatherapist and theatre practitioner on the experience of the individual participants, the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings has shown how each of these roles was animated by a different set of motivations with important bearings on the unfolding of the research. The thematic category of 'risks and

[102] See subsection 4.2.1. Profile of the participants who completed the research project in Chapter 4
[103] See subsection 5.3.3. above

safety'[104] has particularly highlighted how the structure of the performance workshop enabled the participants to feel safe and to take greater risks with regards to the disclosure of personal material. The dramatherapy structure of the research, guided by my dramatherapist role, enabled the participants to feel contained and supported, as reflected in the way they felt protective of the research group and illustrated in the third focus group[105]. Although the demands attached to these different roles appeared sometimes in conflict, as shown in the reflective performance[106], they also complemented one another by providing a range of responses to the diverse needs of the research and of the participants.

If this multiplicity of roles was previously identified as one of the features of arts-based research (McNiff, 2008) and performance as research (Hadley, 2013), this study has particularly illustrated and demonstrated the methodological benefits of approaching research from a number of different perspectives as advocated by Sajnani (2012b). The 'polyvocality' of the researcher (ibid., p.190), as dramatherapist and theatre practitioner, proved to have a profound impact on the production of data and their meaning. Not only did it facilitate the engagement of the participants in the research, it also provided the foundation for a process of co-creation to emerge.

5.5.2.2. Relationship between the individual participants and the external audience

The experience of performing for an external audience on two different occasions had validating and invalidating effects on the research participants as performers, with implications for the meaning of their performances. This has been particularly highlighted in the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings for the thematic category of 'being witnessed (by the audience)'[107].

Jenny and Sophie found in the comments and feedback of the audience, following the second set of performances, ways of understanding the emotions conveyed through their performances. It was as if the audience provided them with a mirror in which they could recognise and see themselves. Jenny found in the dialogue with the audience a vocabulary to understand herself better, similar to the effects of her interactions with others within the

[104] See subsection 5.3.6. above
[105] See subsection 4.5.6. Composite summary of findings for the third focus group in Chapter 4
[106] See 'Table Reflection reflective performance' available at https://vimeo.com/223889720
[107] See subsection 5.3.2. above

research group as described above[108]. It was as if the audience was authoring her story by filling the gaps within it, and lifting the blindfold of her own perceived limitations to open her field of vision. Sophie's experience also illustrates how the feedback from the audience completed her performance and confirmed what she was attempting to communicate. She recognised in the audience's comments something that they had recognised in her:

> "*That was really interesting that other people's perceptions were exactly what I wanted to get across without realizing that was what I wanted to get across*"[109].

If these findings illustrate and confirm the validating role of the audience in autobiographical performance as documented in the literature in dramatherapy (Rubin, 2016; Emunah, 2015; Bailey, 2009), they also show how the audience actively participates in the creation of the meaning of the performances. They provide an empirical illustration of theoretical views expressed in the fields of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies. In the context of dramatherapy research, the findings substantiate the theoretical claim made by Seymour that the meaning of autobiographical performance lies 'between the knowledge, experiences and vocabularies of the performer and the audience' (Seymour, 2016, p.209). They show how meaning results from certain transactions whereby the audience is recognised for its 'shared role of meaning making' (Alker, 2015, p.195). They illustrate how meaning is located within a triangular relationship between the performer, the spectator and the performance object (Jones, 2005), as described in the epistemological framework of the research[110]. They also show the relevance of the concept of the active witness in autobiographical performance (Jones, 1993) to describe how the audience co-authors the production of meaning by virtue of its position of difference as active interpreter. In the context of research in the field of theatre and performance studies, the findings provide an illustration of how the experiences of the performer and spectator mutually inform one another in a way that has particularly shown the authoring role of the latter in the meaning of the performance (Radosavljevič, 2013). They show the relevance for autobiographical performance of theoretical views that envisage the role of the spectator as an individual and autonomous subject endowed with their own sense of agency and consciousness (Rancière, 2011), and their effect on the performance event and its meaning (Bennett, 1997). They illustrate how Heddon (2013) previously considered the way in which the spectator actualises the performance and its meaning for the performer.

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[108] See film 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo, 57'41'' into the film

[109] Taken from the post-project individual interview

[110] See section 2.7. in Chapter 2

In contrast to the experience of Jenny and Sophie following the second set of performances, the effect of the audience on Karen, Sophie and Henry following the third set of performances was experienced as invalidating. The three of them felt hurt, angry and disrespected following written feedback in the post-performance session that tainted their overall experience of the performance workshop, and put in doubt the worthiness of their efforts. This was most notably the case for Karen and Sophie who felt criticised for some of the aesthetic choices made in their performances in a way that very nearly shattered the meaning of their performances for them. Their particular experiences elucidate an aspect of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy that is generally overlooked in the literature, and that Emunah summarised in the following question: 'what if the audience does not really understand or empathize?' (Emunah, 1994, p.99).

If these findings contradict some of the assumptions made in the dramatherapy literature about the benevolence and acceptance of a well-intentioned audience unreservedly on the side of the performer (Johnson, 2016; Emunah, 2015), they also raise three significant ethical issues for the autobiographical performance as a domain of research in both fields of dramatherapy and theatre and performance studies. The first one concerns the vulnerability and safety of the performer disclosing sensitive information about themselves, possibly for the first time. The exposure to the comments of others in the audience straight after the performance produced for Karen and Sophie a reverse effect on what their performances meant to them. The findings confirm the benefits of providing for the performers a space of sharing whereby they are given an opportunity 'to fuse process and product' (Emunah, 2016, p.45). In the context of the research, this was achieved in the third focus group that enabled Karen and Sophie to process their experiences and to reintegrate the meaning of their performances. The second ethical question concerns the protection of the audience potentially unwillingly exposed to or immersed in life experiences, or modes of representing those experiences, that may cause distress and negative responses. The findings suggest the limits of the strategies put into place to prepare the audience for the performances[111]. They also suggest the relevance for autobiographical performance of an ethics of spectatorship (Fitzpatrick, 2011) that reflects a balance between a desire to express oneself artistically and a desire to connect and foster understanding. As Park-Fuller wrote, 'to determine their

[111] See subsection 3.3.3. Ethical framework in Chapter 3

[autobiographical performances'] efficacy requires a consideration of audiences' (Park-Fuller, 2000, p.34). The findings of the research show how an interdisciplinary approach to ethics in autobiographical performance deepens the discussion on ethical ways of engaging with audiences, by safeguarding them from harm, as particularly highlighted in the dramatherapy literature, and by privileging connection and a sense of shared reality, as highlighted in the theatre and performance studies literature. The last ethical point concerns the appropriateness of choosing methods of data collection whose outcomes are highly unpredictable and potentially damaging for the participants in autobiographical research. This aspect of research practice raises questions about safe ways of engaging with the audience as interlocutor in performance-based methodologies (Leavy, 2014).

5.5.2.3. Relationship between the individual participants and the research context

The findings of the research have revealed an additional layer of relationality in the production of autobiographical performances and on the experience of the research participants by showing the effects of the socio-educational context surrounding the study. If the review of the literature on autobiographical performance, most notably in the field of theatre and performance studies, highlighted how its practice is closely linked to a critique of the socio-political and discursive context in which it takes place by revealing the lived experience of certain social groups[112] (Heddon, 2008; Gale and Gardner, 2004), this research has particularly shown the effects of the immediate research and performance context on the devising process. This aspect of relational processes in autobiographical performance highlighted in the thematic categories of 'being witnessed'[113], remains largely unexplored in the literature, although appearing to have a significant effect on the production of meaning. This was, for instance, illustrated by Henry and Louise who reflected on the impact of knowing who would be coming to the public performances, especially friends but also lecturers from their course at Anglia Ruskin University. These representatives of their social world created a sense of anticipation that influenced how they approached and devised their performances. Karen and Sophie described the effect of not being assessed for their performances as was the case in the autobiographical performance module of the Dramatherapy MA at ARU. This gave them a larger sense of freedom and creativity to engage with aspects of their personal experience through performance.

[112] Such as in the performances of Tami Spry, Tim Miller and Robbie McAuley as reviewed in subsection 2.3.2 in Chapter 2
[113] See subsection 5.3.2. above

For other participants, such as Karen and Nathan, the external context of the research was reflected in their performances by questioning social attitudes towards specific issues, such as dyslexia and climate change. For Jenny, the research group was like a cultural microcosm of her personal situation as a foreign student in a different social environment. If the research group was a representation of what she found difficult culturally and linguistically, it also became the medium through which she was able, as a performer, to overcome some of these differences and barriers. This is illustrated in the film about the different autobiographical performances[114] at 1hr 5mins 14secs into the film.

Lastly, the context also reflects the educational backdrop of doctoral study that shaped the rationale, design and strategy of the research. The participants were aware from the outset of the purpose of the research beyond its declared aims. That particular knowledge appeared to have an effect on some of the research participants, most notably those with a dramatherapy background, who demonstrated a greater willingness to engage with the process. Besides, my anxieties as a doctoral student wanting to demonstrate the essential competencies to succeed, was also a reflection of the institutional context of the research, as shown in the reflective performance[115].

To summarize the answer to the first research question, the production of meaning in autobiographical performance is understood as emerging from complex configurations of interactions within the research group, including myself as researcher and the external audience, as well as the socio-educational context surrounding the study. As we have seen, these interactions both assist and hinder the meaning making process for the performers. Figure 5 above provides a visual representation of the relationships between the different layers of relationality as described above, and a model for a relational understanding of meaning making in the context of autobiographical performance. It shows how autobiographical performance can be understood as an 'intersubjective matrix' (Pitruzzella, 2017) whereby knowledge is produced in interaction with others. It questions the notion of self-referential meaning by locating it within a web of interactions and relationships (Heddon, 2013). This matrix reflects a structural analysis of the data that, in phenomenological

[114] See 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances' available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo
[115] See 'Table Reflection reflective performance' available at https://vimeo.com/223889720, 12'41" into the film

terms[116], emphasises how the production of meaning is context dependent. The discussion so far has failed to address embodied processes within the intersubjective space of autobiographical performance. These will be explicitly addressed in the next two subsections looking at the second and third research questions.

5.5.3. Dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness

Research question 2: How might we describe and understand the dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness in the shared space of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, and the way in which it informs the meaning making process?

The findings of the research have shown how the experiences of the performers and the witnesses (or spectators) in autobiographical performance inform one another in a way that significantly contribute to the production of meaning for all of them. The findings have also highlighted singular aspects of the dynamic relationship between performers and witnesses, particularly the role played by the lived body and pre-reflective processes in the perception and communication of knowledge. This is particularly reflected in the final findings 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7[117].

The findings that reflect the dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness have been most notably made explicit in the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings for the thematic categories of 'witnessing (including resonance)'[118], 'being witnessed (by the group and the audience)'[119], 'personal change and meaning'[120], 'artistic choices and process (form and content)'[121].

[116] See subsection 3.2.2.1. in Chapter 3
[117] See above section 5.4.
[118] See above subsection 5.3.1.
[119] See above subsection 5.3.2.
[120] See above subsection 5.3.4.
[121] See above subsection 5.3.5.

The analysis of the findings has provided a detailed description of the effects of witnessing and being witnessed on the respective lived experiences of the spectator and the performer. As such, they have addressed one of the gaps in the existing research in autobiographical performance regarding a lack of empirical data on these particular experiences[122]. Since the previous subsection[123] substantially discussed the effects of being witnessed on the experience of the research participants as performers[124], this subsection mainly discusses the effects of witnessing on the experience of the participants as witnesses and performers in the research group. It mainly focuses on the dynamic relationship between the roles of performer and witness that were alternatively adopted by the research participants, and its effects on the meaning making process[125].

The discussion first addresses the way in which the witnessing of autobiographical performances within the research group informed the experiences of the research participants, the production of the different autobiographical performances and their meaning. It then considers the role played by the lived body of the spectator in the experience of witnessing and the creation of meaning.

5.5.3.1. Effects of witnessing on the experience of the research participants

The analysis of the juxtaposition of findings has revealed how the represented lived experience of the performer on stage can affect and transform the lived experience of the witness, in ways that had not previously been described in detail in the dramatherapy literature. It has shown how the experiencing of autobiographical performance provides opportunities for change for the spectator as much as it actualises the lived experience of the performer, as indicated in the theatre and performance studies literature (Heddon, 2013). The design of the performance workshop provided a particular structure to explore the concrete effects of the act of witnessing on the lived experiences of the spectators[126]. Its dialogic design (Norris and Sawyer, 2012) enabled the actualisation of the experience of the witness

[122] See point 1) in section 2.4. in Chapter 2
[123] Subsection 5.5.2.
[124] It can be argued that the different layers of relationality presented above in Figure 5 also represent different 'layers of witnessing' (Jones, 2007: 112) that have, as I have shown and discussed, a particular impact on the experience of the research participants as performers
[125] It can be noted that the data collected in the two post-performance discussions were not intended to provide a detailed description of the experience of the members of the external audience as witnesses, but rather to gather information about the way in which they connected or not with the different performances. See section 4.7. in Chapter 4
[126] See subsection 3.3.5. in Chapter 3

through the generating of autobiographical performances (Alexander, 2000). It produced a number of findings that show how the act of witnessing informs the lived experience of those watching. As such, these findings address one of the current challenges of audience research in terms of understanding the particular experiences of the audience, but also, as Sedgman writes, 'what people do with these experiences' (Sedgman, 2018, p.315). They show that the outcomes of the research have implications for other domains of study[127] beyond the field of autobiographical performance, whilst recognising at the same time the relevance of these domains to further the understanding of particular dynamics in the performance of autobiographical material, particularly with regards to the experience of the witnessing spectators.

The analysis of the juxtaposition of findings, including the film of the different performances[128], has shown the profound impact of witnessing the performances of others on the experience of all of the seven research participants and on their creative autobiographical journey. The overlap between the thematic category of 'witnessing' and 'personal change and meaning' has highlighted the transformative effects of being a witness to others[129]. This was most notably the case for Karen who recognised in the initial performance of Jenny aspects of her own experience of dyslexia, but also ways of articulating and communicating that experience[130]. This was also the case for Natalia who found in the performances of Jenny, Nathan and Louise ways of accessing and engaging differently with her own self[131]. These findings show how the staged lived experience of others operates as a mirror in which the witnesses can see the reflection of unarticulated or disowned parts of their own selves[132].

The research findings provide an empirical basis for the argument developed by Casson (1997) about the healing effect of the theatrical experience for those witnessing it. They shed light on the phenomenon of the therapeusis of the audience in the context of autobiographical performance whereby life experiences collide in ways that create renewed possibilities and meanings for those involved, as the research has demonstrated. The findings illustrate ways in which autobiographical performance facilitates the transformative witnessing of audience

[127] Such as for instance the field of audience studies and research
[128] Available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo
[129] See subsection 5.3.4.2. above for a summary of these changes linked to the experience of witnessing
[130] See 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances', 45'16'' and 49'43'' into the film
[131] See 5'38'' into the film
[132] This process is very similar to the one described in the act of being witnessed whereby the performer also finds in the witness a mirror in which they can recognise themselves, as discussed in subsection 5.5.2.2. above

members (Sajnani, 2010) in the sense of contemplating what could be, as opposed to what is. They show how these moments of transformation can be understood as expressions of processes of identification and resonance, not only with the lived experience of the performer but also with the aesthetics of the representation of that experience[133]. As MacKay argued in the context of therapeutic theatre, the phenomenon of change for the audience is an expression of moments of resonance that produce 'shifts in awareness' (McKay, 1996, p.171). They also reflect ways in which the self of the witness can recognise itself in the actions and experiences of the performer and, as a result, reach new levels of knowledge and meaning. Grainger notably suggested that the transformation experienced by the witnessing spectator in theatre arises from an 'emotional involvement' (Grainger, 2014, p.125) and identification with the stories of others as performed on stage. Grainger argued that this identification with others in performance is the catalyst through which the spectators become able to understand and experience themselves differently as individuals. It explains how the spectators can 'draw connections to their own personal experiences' (Miller and Taylor, 2006, p.117) and make visible the other within. For Grainger, it is in that connection that healing takes place as it 'brings home the sense of awareness of our own existence' (Grainger, 2005a, p.4). The mechanisms described by Grainger provide a particular framework to understand the 'expansion of individual awareness' (Grainger, 2014, p.132) that characterised the experience of the research participants in their position of witnesses of others in the performance workshop. It also enables an understanding of how meaning emerges from a particular form of experiencing of the other in the space of autobiographical performance, and how it is located at the intersection of the experience of the witness with the experience of the performer. It shows a phenomenon of reciprocity in the shared space of autobiographical performance whereby witness and performer mutually construe meaning through their encounter, and whereby the performance itself, as Grainger suggested, 'crystallises an experience of betweenness that is creative of personhood' (Grainger, 2005b, p.8).

5.5.3.2. Embodied witnessing

The discussion so far has highlighted the transformative effects of witnessing others on the experiences of the spectators in autobiographical performance. It has enabled a better

[133] The significance of aesthetics in the production of meaning in autobiographical performance will be examined in more details in the following subsection 5.5.4.

understanding of the relationship between the seer, as witness, and the seen, as performer, and how the former finds transformative opportunities in the latter, as the research findings have shown. It has substantiated the way in which Alexander described 'the resonant traces of lived experience' (Alexander, 2000, p.104) echoing in the witnesses as a result of their involvement in autobiographical performance. But the research findings have also revealed a singular aspect of the experience of witnessing, and of the relationship between performer and witness, that has received little attention in the literature on autobiographical performance. This refers to the role played by the lived body as a mode and locus of experience and perception.

The role played by the lived body was reflected in the experiences of four of the research participants (Natalia, Karen, Nathan and Jenny), and in the way in which they connected with the staged lived experiences of others. Besides, it also reflected a pre-reflexive mode of engagement with the experiences of others that was particularly illustrated by Natalia and Nathan.

Natalia's experience in the research group revealed how her connection with the three initial performances of Jenny, Nathan and Louise[134] was primarily experienced at a subconscious level and through her own body self. Her description indicated how she felt physically plunged into their different worlds and made to experience them through her senses. This resulted in subsequent performances that reflected a sensory and embodied mode of engaging with herself and others. Her last performance showed how she, quite noticeably, reclaimed her story by embodying it on stage. She described how the witnessing of others gave her a "*non-verbal access into something*"[135].

Like Natalia, Karen described a profound connection with the initial performance of Jenny, that she also experienced through her body self. Jenny's performance physically resonated in a way that reminded Karen of the physical sensations and feelings of her dyslexia, and which words could not convey. She described how the use of sounds and a general "*disorientating feeling*"[136] in Jenny's performance enabled her to find an embodied language to communicate the nature of her experience of dyslexia. Her embodied engagement with the performance of

[134] As shown in the film of the different performances 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances' available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo
[135] Taken from the second focus group
[136] Taken from the post-project individual interview

Jenny resulted in an embodied experience of her own self, that found an expression in performance and that resulted in tangible change as she felt more able to make sense of her own condition.

Nathan described how he connected with the physical energy communicated through Sophie's first performance. He also observed that he was physically involved in Louise's second performance through spontaneous and improvised body movements. These experiences as witness resulted in an embodied connection with himself as a performer. This became most visible in his last performance whereby he "*discovered movement*"[137] and expressed himself purely physically[138]. Although Nathan found it generally quite difficult to verbally reflect on his experience in the research group, he nevertheless observed how his participation produced a different form of experiencing that, as he said, "*comes before language*"[139].

Jenny's engagement with her own body as a witness is different from the way in which it has been described for the three other participants. If Jenny produced embodied performances that directly engaged with the bodies of the spectators, her own body as a witness gave her the capacity and resources to reflect and understand her connections with the performances of others, and to overcome the difficulty of "*finding the words*"[140].

These four different examples illustrate the significance of embodied processes in the act of witnessing and in the theatrical experience of the audience in autobiographical performance. It can be described as embodied witnessing that corresponds to the role of the experiencing body in the process of witnessing, and in the production of embodied knowledge and meaning. It adds to the understanding of the dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness by showing how the connections between the two also operate at an embodied and pre-conscious level, outside of discursive structures.

The review of the literature in dramatherapy has shown a lack of critical discussion on the significance of embodied processes in the production and reception of autobiographical performance. By contrast, the literature in theatre and performance studies largely describes

[137] Taken from the post-project individual interview
[138] See 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances', 41'43" into the film
[139] Taken from the post-project individual interview
[140] Taken from the post-project individual interview

autobiographical performance as an embodied art form whereby the body is a testimony to history and discursive practices, but also a stage whereby identity and agency are being redefined and reclaimed (Spry, 1997; Schneider, 1997; Carver, 1998). Yet, the literature appears to mainly focus on the body of the performer and to overlook the effects of the embodied reception of the performance on the lived experience of the witness. As the review of the literature has indicated, data on the actual experience of the audience in autobiographical performance are scarce. The research findings provide therefore significant advancements for both fields of study on the role played by the lived body in the witnessing process.

The research findings through the experience of the research participants have particularly highlighted a significant feature of the phenomenon of embodied witnessing in autobiographical performance. Namely, the way in which the embodied experience of the other, as performer, informs the embodied lived experience of the self, as witness, and creates transformational possibilities for the latter. Recent advances in the field of the cognitive sciences as well as in the field of phenomenological research have shed light onto that particular dynamic between performer and witness, and how it informs the meaning making process.

Scientific discoveries in the cognitive and neurosciences have asserted how body, feeling and cognition are parts of one single and complex organic process (Blair and Lutterbie, 2011). They have suggested that the conscious mind is formed through our embodied relationships with others and the world, and through the way in which we experience ourselves as embodied beings (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 2016). Our embodied perceptual experience, therefore, creates internal emotional states that in turn generate their own embodied responses. The experiences of Nathan and Natalia, as summarised above, appear to particularly illustrate how their engagement with the performances of others were reflected in bodily sensations and sensorimotor processes, that in turn created specific embodied responses. Their connections and resonance with the lived experiences of others were conveyed through their bodies, and were largely pre-reflexive. They differed from other research participants who were more directly consciously identifying with the staged lived experiences of others. Natalia's and Nathan's experiencing of the performances of others enabled them to experience themselves differently as embodied beings, but also to present themselves differently as embodied performers engaged in self-exploration. Their

descriptions illustrate some of the neural connections that may exist across the shared space of performance between witnesses and performers (Falletti, 2016). They complement some other findings in the interdisciplinary field of cognitive sciences and performance by showing that, if our embodied experiencing of others can contribute to our understanding of them through neural resonance (Strukus, 2011), it can also result in an increased capacity to understand ourselves or to physically relate to ourselves. As such, they confirm how the relationship between witnesses and performers can be described as co-constitutive through their mutual embodied experiences (Sofia, 2016).

The connection between different embodied experiences and its effect on the creation of meaning has received further attention in the field of phenomenological research and in its application to the study of theatre and performance[141]. As Bleeker, Sherman and Nedelkopoulou (2015, p.4) observed, 'phenomenology has provided contemporary performers with a language for thinking how bodies operate and create meaning between each other'. The experiences of Karen and Jenny in the research group can be understood in terms of phenomenological processes, particularly those of intercorporeality (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b) and intertwining (Merleau-Ponty, 1968)[142]. As described above, Karen's experience in the performance workshop was characterised by the recognition of her own body self in the performing body of Jenny. Furthermore, as Jenny witnessed the second performance of Karen, devised in response to her own, she experienced a profound embodied connection that she described in the following terms: "*it was as if the two of us were the same person*"[143]. Their descriptions translate how, in phenomenological language, the embodied experience of the self is inseparable from the embodied experience of the other, and how they both create a 'unified experience' (Moran, 2013, p.286). They show how their embodied encounter created a sense of mutual understanding (Tanaka, 2015) that transcended differences as they could both recognise themselves in the embodied presentation of the other, and make sense of their individual experience. As such, the experiences of Karen and Jenny illustrate the creation of common meaning (Fuchs and De Jaegher, 2009) through the embodied engagement of the witness with the performer, and vice-versa, in autobiographical performance. They confirm other phenomenological studies that have described the significance of reciprocal embodied

[141] Although not directly in the context of autobiographical performance as indicated in the review of the context of the research in Chapter 2
[142] As described in the Methodology chapter in subsections 3.2.2.4. and 3.2.2.5.
[143] From the post-project individual interview

processes in the production of affects and meaning in the experience of performance and theatre (Kozel, 2012).

To summarize the answer to the second research question, the dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness is understood as being the expression of the way in which they are both engaged in a process of reciprocal self-discovery based on mutual relationships in the shared space of autobiographical performance. This subsection particularly examined the effects of the performer on the experience of the witnessing audience, whereas the previous subsection described the effects of the different levels of witnessing on the experience of the performer. The discussion has highlighted how their dynamic and mutual relationships shaped the production of the autobiographical performance event and its meaning.

The discussion has provided a deeper understanding of the witnessing process in autobiographical performance. It has particularly illustrated how witnessing creates meaning for the witness through a process of resonance and identification. As such, it has shown the transformative potential of autobiographical performance for those witnessing it. The discussion has confirmed and substantiated, in the context of performance practice, many of the ways in which the process of witnessing has been described in the dramatherapy literature, particularly in relation to the structuring of experience for the witness. As Jones wrote, 'witnessing might open up an experience that they [clients] have felt silent and stuck with to exploration and reflection' (Jones, 2007, p.112). Yet, the discussion has also uncovered the significance of embodied processes in the experience of witnessing, and the way in which those contribute to the production of meaning for the witness. As such, the discussion has shown the overlap between the core processes of witnessing, transformation and embodiment in the context of autobiographical performance practice in dramatherapy (Jones, 1996; 2007). It has also indicated the relevance to the study of autobiographical performance of other disciplines, such as the neurosciences and phenomenology, to comprehend and unravel the complex way in which connections are created through the body.

5.5.4. Co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance

Research question 3:

How might we describe and understand the process of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy?

The analysis of the juxtaposition of findings has shown how the different aspects of the experience of the research participants in the performance workshop, examined under the different thematic categories, are closely associated with individual change and the development of new meanings[144]. It has indicated how the production of meaning of the different autobiographical performances created by the participants emerged from relational, intersubjective, embodied and aesthetic processes. This is reflected in all of the final findings[145].

The production of meaning in autobiographical performance can therefore be described as being located at the intersection of these different processes that all reflect elements of relationality within the space of the research. Figure 6 provides a representation of how meaning is the expression of aesthetic, intersubjective and embodied processes within the shared space of autobiographical performance. It brings together these different dimensions of experience to understand and explain how meaning can be described as a co-creation[146].

[144] Meaning was defined in the Introductory chapter as the conscious act of understanding, structuring and integrating aspects of personal experience in a given context. See subsection 1.4.2.
[145] See above section 5.4.
[146] It can be noted that these three processes reflect and confirm those at play in the practice of autobiographical performance as reviewed in the literature in theatre and performance studies – see subsection 2.3.2. in Chapter 2

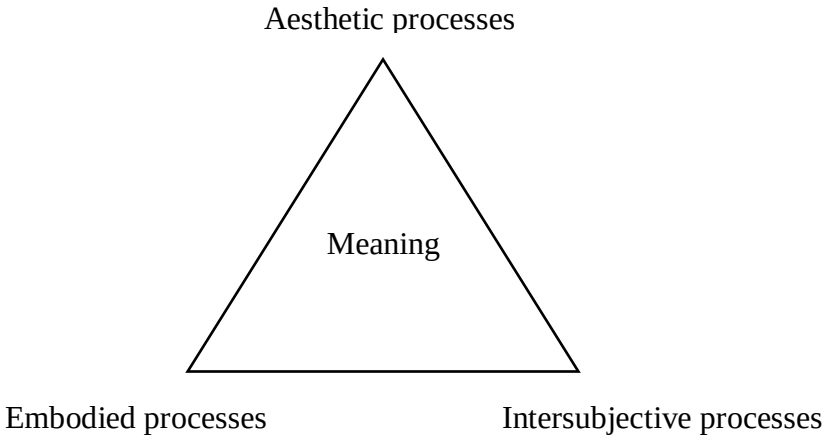

FIGURE 6: Processes of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance

The discussion in the following subsections will examine the three different processes as reflected in the experiences of the research participants, in the production of the different performances[147], and in relation to the meaning making process:

- aesthetic processes refer to the way in which autobiographical performance is a particular form of representation of lived experience that mediates the relationship between the performer and the spectator (or witness),

- intersubjective processes refer to the different levels of interpersonal relationships within the shared space of autobiographical performance throughout the different stages of the devising process,

- embodied processes refer to the particular significance of the lived body of the performer and spectator (or witness) in the production and reception of autobiographical performance.

The discussion will also examine how the three different processes relate to the epistemological and methodological frameworks of the research[148].

[147] As documented in the film 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances' available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo
[148] An evaluation of the research methodologies adopted in the research will be carried out in greater detail in the following Conclusion chapter

5.5.4.1. Aesthetic processes

The role and function of aesthetics in relation to the production of meaning has been described in the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings under the thematic categories of 'artistic choices and process (form and content)'[149] and 'personal change and meaning'[150]. The final findings have reflected how the aesthetics of the performances created particular kinds of connection between performers and witnesses, in a way that generated insights and produced opportunities for change and transformation[151]. These were made explicit through the performance workshop design that allowed for an aesthetic response to a particular aesthetic experience. More specifically, the analysis has shown how the aesthetics of the performances provided a distance that facilitated a connection with the performed lived experience of others and consequently a connection with aspects of one's own experience.

This was most notably the case for Henry, Karen and Jenny in the research group. Henry's last performance shows how he found in Karen's second performance the aesthetic means to explore and represent the impact of health problems on his life[152]. The witnessing of Karen's performance provided an aesthetic distance (Landy, 1993; Scheff, 1976) to disclose and engage safely with a sensitive aspect of his experience. Through his performance, Henry faced the reality of his own health in ways that produced concrete change as he stopped drinking alcohol following his performance. Karen's second performance shows how her aesthetic experience of Jenny's first performance provided her with a language to explore and communicate what her dyslexia feels like. Similarly, Jenny found in Karen's performance an aesthetic resonance with her experience of living in a foreign environment, and her difficulty in communicating with and understanding others. Both performances provided aesthetic distance to create particular connections that held new meanings. In Jenny's case, the witnessing of Karen's performance enabled an emotional connection with her experience of living abroad. Whereas for Karen, the witnessing of Jenny's performance created the opposite effect of opening a space for reflecting on and understanding her experience in a way that became communicable to others.

[149] See above subsection 5.3.5.
[150] See above subsection 5.3.4.
[151] See final finding 3 in section 5.4.
[152] See 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances', 1hr 10'11'' into the film

These three examples confirm a number of theoretical assertions and empirical findings in the dramatherapy literature on the function of aesthetic processes in facilitating connection, resonance and transformation. They illustrate how Grainger (2005b; 2014) argued that aesthetics regulates the capacity for empathy and identification in theatre, but also the unlocking of personal knowledge and meaning. They also corroborate the views that aesthetics is a carrier in which the respective lived experience of the performer and the spectator can be held together, and whereby possibilities for mutual transformation are created (Emunah, 1994; Sajnani, 2016). These examples confirm recent research findings in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy (Woods, 2018) that show how the aesthetics of the representation provides a distance that facilitates affective and reflective engagement, and fosters acceptance and understanding.

The findings of the research have highlighted the liminal and transitional qualities contained in the aesthetics of autobiographical performance, and how these enable transactions of meaning between 'me' and 'not me' phenomena, as previously discussed by Schechner (1985) in his seminal study of the theatrical experience. Although this link does not seem to have been suggested in the existing literature on autobiographical performance, the findings have indicated how the aesthetic representation of experience opens a potential space (Winnicott, 1971) between the actual lived experience of the performer and of the spectator, and whereby the expression and meaning of those can be reconstructed. The same line of argument was developed by Fischer-Lichte who suggested how the aesthetics of a performance 'transfers spectators into liminal situations, possibly resulting in various kinds of transformation' (Fischer-Lichte, 2016, p.164).

In the specific context of autobiographical performance in theatre and performance studies, the 'generative autobiography' created by Alexandre (2000) is an illustration of how his relationship to the particular aesthetics of a performance created aesthetic possibilities to revisit his own experience. The findings of the research complement the rare studies that have described the effects of aesthetics on the lived experience of the spectators in autobiographical performance. They create an opening for the field of theatre and performance studies to critically re-evaluate the function of aesthetics for the way in which it

doesn't only support the communication of a message to an audience, but also creates affective connections between the lived experiences of the performer and the spectator[153].

The findings have substantiated the epistemological framework of the research[154] by showing how the meaning created through aesthetic processes in the research group is the expression of a triangular relationship between the performer, the spectator and the performance object. They have indicated how aesthetics operates as a regulating mechanism (Grainger, 2005b) that enables a lesser or greater identification with the performed lived experience of others. They have shown how autobiographical performance, as a construct (Park-Fuller, 2000), aesthetic object and a not-me possession, facilitates a communicative exchange between different experiences (Kester, 2004) and creates opportunities for transformation (Miller and Taylor, 2006). This process was particularly made visible through the production of successive performances in the research group and the adoption of a performance-based methodology[155]. Such a methodology revealed the nature of aesthetic knowledge in the research as being an expression of shared meanings emerging from a connection with a particular form of artistic representation of human experience.

5.5.4.2. Intersubjective processes

The effects of intersubjective processes on the production of autobiographical performances and their meaning have already been discussed above in relation to the relational context of the research and the relationship between performers and witnesses[156]. The findings have shown how the creation of meaning has emerged from complex configurations of interactions and relationships within the research group. The different levels of intersubjective relationships within the group include:

- the relationships between participants within the research group and the two small groups,
- the relationships between participants as performers and witnesses of one another,
- the relationships between participants and the external audience,
- the relationships between participants and the researcher.

[153] See section 2.3.2.2. in Chapter 2
[154] See section 2.7. in Chapter 2
[155] See subsection 3.2.1. in Chapter 3
[156] See subsections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3.

The findings have provided an empirical basis to the theoretical assertions that 'relational factors can have a natural and vital role to play' in the creation of autobiographical performance (Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez, 2014, p.102). They have enabled an understanding of the production of meaning as being the expression of 'dialogical encounters' (Kester, 2004, p.92) within the shared space of the performance. Furthermore, the findings have shown how the structure and meaning of personal experience, in the context of autobiographical performance, is constructed in relation to others[157]. They have illustrated the argument developed by Ratcliffe on the interpersonal nature of human experience:

> 'The interpersonal world is a dance of changing possibilities, some of which are experienced as 'mine', others as 'belonging to someone else' and others as 'ours', the three being inextricably linked. All interpersonal experience retains a sense of the other person as distinct from oneself and, with this, of certain possibilities being hers and others one's own. But experience of being with another person also involves our having possibilities and our transforming a shared space of possibilities together' (Ratcliffe, 2013, p.229).

The different layers of relationality within the research group[158] are the expression of a complex variety of intersubjective processes that, it can be argued, also represent transactions between 'me' and 'not me' phenomena (Schechner, 1985). The examples of Jenny, Sophie, Natalia, Karen, and Henry, particularly, have shown how the different positions that they adopted in the research group as performers being witnessed by others, and as witnesses of others performing, contributed to the restructuring of their individual staged lived experiences. They have illustrated the co-authoring role of the performer and the witness in autobiographical performance as they mutually complete and authorise their respective experiences and their meaning (Sajnani, 2016; Radosavljević, 2013).

The findings have substantiated the epistemological framework of the research by showing how a relationship of difference between performer and witness (or spectator) creates an aesthetics that not only transcends their individual experiences but is also an expression of their encounter in the transitional space of performance (Sajnani, 2016; Bourriaud, 2002). This particular aspect of co-creative processes in autobiographical performance was revealed through the multi-method design of the research. If the performance as research methodology enabled a creative dialogue between different lived experiences as performed and witnessed,

[157] A relation that can validate or invalidate one's own experience as discussed above in subsection 5.5.2.2.
[158] See Figure 5: Layers of relationality in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, in subsection 5.5.2.

a relational phenomenological methodology clarified the nature of that dialogue and its meaning for the research participants. The findings have shown how a multi-disciplinary methodological approach significantly deepens the understating of processes at play in autobiographical performance as field and object of research.

5.5.4.3. Embodied processes

The effects of embodied and non-verbal processes on the experience of the participants in the research group, on the production of their different autobiographical performances, and on the meaning making process have already been discussed above, particularly in the context of the dynamic relationship between the role of the performer and the witness[159]. The research findings have shown how embodied connections between the participants contributed to the production of knowledge and meaning, as much as aesthetic and intersubjective processes. Thus, embodied processes complete the triangle of meaning making in autobiographical performance (Figure 6) by highlighting the significance of the lived body as an additional mechanism through which one can experience oneself through the experiencing of others. The findings have substantiated the epistemological framework of the research by showing how the transactions of meaning within the shared space of autobiographical performance between the performer, the spectator and the performance object also reflect pre-verbal and pre-reflexive processes.

This particular dimension of intersubjective experience within the research group was revealed through a combination of methodologies that place particular emphasis on the way in which embodied processes inform the creation of meaning. The exploration of the meaning making process in autobiographical performance through means of performance unveiled ways in which the body is a site of knowledge (Pelias, 2008), and a nexus (Spry, 2001) in the perception and communication of experience. Equally, a relational phenomenological approach to research, largely indebted to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, enabled a better understanding of the embodied experience of the research participants in relation to other bodies in the research context. With the particular focus on embodied intersubjectivity in relational phenomenological research (Finlay, 2009a), the research findings have shown how such a process contributed to the emergence of new knowledge and meaning for the

[159] See subsection 5.5.3.

research participants[160]. As such, the findings have uncovered how meaning is embodied (Johnson, 2010) through the sensorimotor and perceptual experiences of being with others in the shared space of autobiographical performance.

This perspective on meaning, based on the impact of embodied intersubjective processes on the experience of the research participants, does not seem to be reflected in the existing literature on autobiographical performance in dramatherapy or in theatre and performance studies. As indicated and discussed above, it has received more attention in the interdisciplinary fields of performance, cognitive sciences and phenomenological research that have investigated the embodied mechanisms through which meaning is created in relation to others in performance (Bleeker, Sherman and Nedelkopoulou, 2015; Falletti, Sofia and Jacono, 2016).

It can be noted that the significance of embodied processes in the research group and its effects on the creation of meaning is not limited to the relationship between performers and witnesses, but applies to all of the intersubjective strands identified above[161]. This includes my embodied presence as researcher (Park Lala and Kinsella, 2011), and its impact on the unfolding of the research and on the production of the data[162]. This also reflects the way in which my own body received and experienced the research process. Both of these aspects are explored in the reflective performance 'Table Reflection' that constitutes a form of embodied reflexivity on the research.

To summarize the answer to the third research question, the process of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy is understood as being located at the intersection of aesthetic, intersubjective and embodied processes. All of the three processes reflect different facets of relationality within the shared space of the research that had significant impact on the experiences of the participants and on the production of their performances. They also reflect dimensions of interdependence and interrelatedness that shaped the way in which meaning is understood as a co-creation.

[160] As discussed above in subsection 5.5.3.2.
[161] See subsection 5.5.4.2.
[162] See 'Table Reflection reflective performance' available at https://vimeo.com/223889720, 27'29" into the film

I now turn to the last phase of the strategy of analysis that consists in the presentation of and a reflection on the feedback from the research participants on all of the previous stages of analysis, including the discussion of the research findings.

5.6. Research participants validation

The validation of the research findings by the research participants was identified in the methodology chapter[163] as one of the strategies to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research outcomes (Finlay and Evans, 2009; Holloway, 1997). It was also envisaged as a way of extending the theoretical premises of this study to the research process itself by allowing the research participants to comment on the research findings and the discussion, and to contribute to the meaning of the research. As Harvey (2014, p.13) writes, it enabled the 'practice of what I theorized'. It was intended to be an adaptation of the 'dialogic collaborative process' (Paulus, Woodside and Ziegler, 2008, p.229) that describes how the different voices of researcher and participants enter into a dialogue on the nature of the meaning of their respective experiences, and the way they understand and interpret the research findings. It was therefore considered as a strategy to support a collaborative understanding of the research findings. I will reflect on the validation process following the description of how validation was solicited.

The validation process consisted of inviting the research participants to complete a questionnaire asking them to comment on the analysis and discussion of the data[164]. The questionnaire was sent to the seven participants after completion of the writing of these two stages of the research. All the research participants returned their questionnaire, although not all questions were answered consistently.

A total of seven documents were individually shared with each participant[165]:

- the audio-visual summary of the participant's performances[166],

[163] See section 3.5. in Chapter 3
[164] See Appendix 26: 'Participants validation questionnaire'
[165] Five of them were referred to in Chapter 4, whilst the remaining two are part of this chapter
[166] See the film 'Audio-visual analysis of the autobiographical performances' available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Wu8YysPLNQEyC9duRvftnKBlsQkMkbVo

- the transcript of the participant's post-project individual interview,
- the individual summary of the participant's post-project individual interview[167],
- the analysis of the post-project individual interviews[168],
- the analysis of the three focus groups[169],
- the juxtaposition of findings[170],
- the discussion of findings[171].

Document 1: audio-visual summary of the participant's performances

Most of the research participants found that the short film synthesising their experience was accurate and valid. Only Natalia explained that she "*didn't have the courage to watch the film*" because of an anxiety to "*confront such a powerfully emotional context*". Sophie explained how she was "*surprised by the accuracy and validity of the short film and by the fair and concise representation*" of her experience. Nathan commented on how the editing "*was a good overview of the project overall*". Jenny described how the film "*described very precisely*" her experience. Henry observed how it was "*fairly accurate in terms of the actual performances*". Karen explained that,

> "*I found that the video really reflected what I was thinking and feeling and my process and experience of taking part in the research group. I found it very accurate and the validity of it was spot on*".

Louise commented that,

> "*I think the short film is very accurate of my experience in the research group. It very much captures the feelings and thought processes accurately and has picked up on key elements and statements of my experience*".

In addition, the research participants shared the following comments. Sophie commented on how the editing technique enabled new meanings to emerge. As she wrote:

> "*Having elements of others' performances which I had identified as influencing factors was a really interesting juxtaposition and brought a renewed awareness and understanding of how I arrived at some performance choices*".

[167] See Appendices 12-18
[168] See section 4.4. in Chapter 4
[169] See section 4.5. in Chapter 4
[170] See section 5.3. in this chapter
[171] See section 5.5 in this chapter

Nathan explained how the film reminded him of how the creative process had been helpful to him:

> **"***I would say that I was still experiencing some difficulties in my mental health and wellbeing during the project and I think it was very valuable to have a space to reflect and work through some of the things that had been concerning me for a while at that point*".

Document 2: transcript of the participant's post-project individual interview

All the participants described the transcript as accurate. Natalia, Sophie, Henry and Louise added an additional comment. Natalia explained that reading the transcript reminded her of the "*excitement*" that she was feeling at the time, although what felt like an "*epiphany did not feel as powerful any more*". Sophie also shared that "*the performances changed in meaning and understanding as time passed and memory altered*" her perception of what she created. Henry commented on how the transcript helped him to "*reconnect with the process, thoughts and feelings*". Louise observed how she felt "*there was a lot more*" she could have explained about her experiences of the research group.

Document 3: individual summary of the participant's post-project individual interview

All the research participants described how the summary translated accurately their experience. Karen explained how the summary "*encapsulated*" what she tried to communicate, but also added meaning to it. Jenny explained that the summary described her experience "*very precisely*". Henry also described how it felt "*very accurate and valid*". Sophie observed how the summary "*provided a clear summary of the accuracy and validity*" of her experience. Natalia described the summary in the following terms:

> "*This was exceptional for me as it revealed the essence of my issue and some of the wording or the descriptions were remarkably concise and to the point, including all the metaphors used*".

Document 4: analysis of the post-project individual interviews

All of the research participants found that the analysis reflected their experience. The validity of the analysis was described in the following terms. Henry described it as "*very valid and*

relevant". Sophie described it as "*fair and enlightening*". Karen observed that the analysis "*gave a really good overview of what went on*". Natalia explained how she found that the analysis was not only valid but also revealed new meanings:

> "*It was also 'revealing' things I hadn't thought of or realised. So I found them mesmerizingly insightful, opening up a new level of understanding to our experience*".

Document 5: analysis of the three focus groups

All of the research participants found that the analysis reflected their experience. Henry added that,

> "*it reflects what we as a group created together, a shared, safe space for an honest and open discussion*".

The validity of the analysis was described in the following terms. Natalia described it as "*very valid, insightful and revealing*". Karen described it as "*valid in its correctness and understanding of what went on for all the participants*". Henry described it as "*certainly valid*". Sophie described it as "*fair and valid*" and added how,

> "*it highlights the importance of the group in the process, not just for ideas but for confidence*".

Document 6: Juxtaposition of findings

The research participants who commented on the analysis of the juxtaposition of findings found it generally interesting. Jenny described it as "*good*". Natalia explained how she found it "*the hardest to read because of some of the theoretical content and so less personal, less relatable and potentially less interesting*". Yet, she also commented that she agreed with the findings that "*make sense*". Sophie related to a particular excerpt of my personal reflective diary[172], and commented that:

> "*It is validating for me as a performer to read that the researcher experienced similar responses to situations as I did*".

Sophie stated that she agreed and connected with the way in which I described the experience

[172] See section 5.3.1.3.

of the participants as co-producers of the meaning of their experience[173]. She also reflected that the thematic category of 'risks and safety'[174] made her realise that "*the audience members also need to be kept safe and to be aware how material may affect them*". Karen described how the juxtaposition of findings was "*truthful in its understanding*" of her participation. She also explained that my personal reflections as researcher were "*helpful*" and "*added another dynamic*" to her own understanding of her experience. Jenny also explained how she "*quite like*d" my personal reflections that made her realise how her "*background*" as dramatherapist trainee influenced the way in which she reacted to the research. Henry commented that the analysis made him realise how "*this type of project could help people when used in practice as a tool for real therapy and exploration*".

Document 7: Discussion of findings

The research participants who commented on the discussion of findings described it in different but complementary terms. Natalia described it as "*interesting but not as interesting*" as the individual summary of her post-project individual interview, and the analysis of the focus groups. She explained how the findings "*made sense and appeared relevant*" although "*a lot less relatable*". Karen described the discussion of the findings as "*comprehensive and in-depth*". She added that,

> "*it captured what I was thinking and feeling, and it reflected my experience of what I took away and found from the process of taking part in the group*".

Karen also commented on how reading about the comment of a member of the audience that upset her following one of her performances, made her realise how this was no longer something she was carrying and how far she has come "*in relation to how other people's thoughts and opinions impact*" on her. Jenny found the discussion "*very inspiring*". She also noticed how the reading of it provided a perspective that "*helped*" her realise aspects of her experience that she had not fully considered. Sophie commented on the design of the research that provided a sense of safety:

> "*It allowed the performer time and space to develop and understand the meaning of their own piece*".

[173] See section 5.3.4.3.
[174] See section 5.3.6.

Henry described how he found the discussion "*an interesting read*". He added how the discussion of his own process was "*an accurate representation*" of his experience within the research group.

Reflection

The feedback and comments provided by the participants have highlighted three main aspects of the research process related to the validity of the findings and the discussion.

Firstly, there is a general agreement between participants on the validity of the analysis and of the findings of the research. None of the participants openly contested or challenged the formulation of the analysis for the different research documents that were shared. In addition, some of the participants confirmed my interpretations of the findings. This was, for instance, the case for Karen who confirmed some of the underlying tension and frustration within the research group and their impact on the research participants[175].

Secondly, it is noticeable that commenting on aspects of the research enabled the participants to reconnect with their experience of the performance workshop. They appeared to make use of the questionnaire to keep reflecting on that experience as opposed to being critical of my interpretations and analysis. Yet, it also appeared that, for some, the intensity of their experience of the workshop faded over time. There was a large gap of three years between the end of the workshop and the reception of the questionnaire. The participants' comments indicate that the changes experienced as a result of their engagement in the research might not have been as long-lasting as one might have anticipated. These comments question the long-term effects of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy (Dokter and Gersie, 2016).

Thirdly, most of the research participants found that my analysis, including the creation of the film, was quite insightful and contributed to the creation of new layers of meaning. This was most notably the case for Natalia in relation to the analysis of the post-project individual interviews. This was also the case for Jenny who shared new awareness associated with the impact of her cultural background on her engagement in the research. Karen shared how my

[175] See subsection 5.5.2.1. in this chapter

personal reflections as researcher contributed to a better understanding of the nature of her experience in the research group.

In summary, the comments provided by the research participants on the different stages of the research process do not in any way invalidate the findings or contradict their interpretations. To the contrary, they confirm the trustworthiness of the study. They also add to the findings by calling attention to the effect of time on change and meaning, and by showing how the sharing of research outcomes with the participants can bring new levels of awareness and insight.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH

Structure of chapter:

6.1. Summary of the research and conclusions

The research has provided a detailed description and analysis of the production of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy, within a multi-method design combining performance as research and relational phenomenological research. The research has particularly highlighted the mechanisms and processes underlying how the production of meaning in autobiographical performance can be understood as emerging from an intersubjective, embodied and aesthetic encounter between the performer and the witness (or spectator). These three different processes at play within the space of performance, and in the stages leading to it, substantiate the argument that the production of meaning can be understood as a co-creation.

The four main research outcomes can be summarised as follows. They represent the particular impact of the study on the interdisciplinary field of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy and in theatre and performance studies:

1. The research has unveiled the complex configuration of interactions and exchanges that take place within the shared space of autobiographical performance, and the significance of interpersonal and intersubjective relationships on the production of meaning. The research has revealed different levels of intersubjective relationships within the research group that were described as layers of relationality. The relationships between these different levels

showed how the meaning of the participants' experience in the research group and of their different performances was constructed in relation to a number of significant others, including the researcher, the external audience and the socio-educational context of the research.

2. The research has shown the reciprocal and dialogical relationship between the role of the performer and the witness, and the way in which they co-author their respective experiences and their meaning. The research has revealed how they mutually inform and complete the nature of their experiences as performer and witness as a result of their engagement and involvement with one another.

3. The research has unveiled the significance of embodied processes in the dynamic between the performer and the witness in the space of autobiographical performance, particularly in relation to the experience of witnessing. These processes were characterized as embodied witnessing to translate the role played by the lived body and the sensorimotor system in the perception of others as performers, and how these inform the embodied lived experience of the witness.

4. The research has indicated how the production of meaning in autobiographical performance is located at the intersection between aesthetic, embodied and intersubjective processes that all had a significant impact on the experiences of the research participants and on the production of their performances. The research has shown the way in which aesthetic processes, particularly, operate as a regulating mechanism to enable a resonance with a performed lived experience. The three different processes reflect different dimensions of co-creation within the shared space of autobiographical performance.

These four different outcomes provide comprehensive answers to the questions that were identified at the outset of the research, and also specifically address the aims of the study[176] [177]. These outcomes illustrate a number of points that significantly advance knowledge in the field of autobiographical performance. I summarise these contributions by relating them to existing knowledge in the practice and theory of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy and in theatre and performance studies.

[176] Refer to section 2.5. in Chapter 2
[177] The implications of the research for dramatherapy theory, practice and research will be examined in section 6.2.

In relation to the practice of autobiographical performance, the research has, firstly, increased the understanding of how this theatre and therapeutic form holds transformational possibilities for both the performer and the witness (or spectator) as a direct result of their encounter. It has provided a detailed analysis of how autobiographical performance can be described as 'a meeting of two subjects whose subjectivities grow and deepen from their mutual encounter' (Madison, 2007, p.829). The research has shown reciprocal processes between the way in which performer and witness understand their individual lived experiences, and how they develop new awareness and meaning. As such, it reflects and follows on from other existing practices, in dramatherapy (Sajnani, 2010; Wood, 2018; Alker, 2015) and in theatre and performance studies (Alexander, 2000), that have emphasised the transformational potential of the encounter between performers and spectators in the performance of lived experience. Secondly, the research has allowed a better understanding of the actual experiences of the performer and the witnesses as part of this encounter. As such, it has addressed one of the gaps in the existing literature in theatre and performance studies on autobiographical performance (Park-Fuller, 2000), and has provided qualitative data that complement the rare studies that have considered the experience of the audience (Seymour, 2016) and the performer (Dokter and Gersie, 2016) in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy. In addition, the research has also revealed the validating and invalidating effects of the witnessing audience on the experience of the performer, in a way that provides a more critical view on the role of the audience in the practice of autobiographical performance, particularly in the context of dramatherapy (Emunah, 2015; Rubin, 2007; Volkas, 2016).

In relation to the theory of autobiographical performance, the research has, firstly, deepened the understanding of the effects of relational and intersubjective dynamics on the production of autobiographical performances and their meaning (Heddon, 2013; Grace, 2006; Sajnani, 2016; Emunah, Raucher and Ramirez-Hernandez, 2014). The research has introduced an original model to describe the different levels of interactions within the shared space of autobiographical performance[178], in a way that conceptualises how the performance and its meaning emerge from a 'co-constructed dynamic system' (Sajnani, 2016, p.89). Secondly, the research has provided a particular understanding of the production of meaning in

[178] See Figure 5: Layers of relationality in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy – subsection 5.5.2. in Chapter 5

autobiographical performance, that did not previously exist in the literature, by bringing together different processes at play in the shared space of performance. If some of these processes had previously received some attention in the existing literature in dramatherapy and in theatre and performance studies (Duggan and Grainger, 1997; Sajnani, 2016; Heddon, 2013; Claycomb, 2012), they had not been integrated in one model conceptualising how meaning is produced in autobiographical performance[179]. Thirdly, the research has contributed to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of witnessing (Jones, 1993; 1996; 2007) when applied to autobiographical performance, by highlighting how it is also conveyed through the experience of the lived body at a pre-reflective level.

6.2. Implications of the research

The last aim of the research[180] concerned the implications of the study for practice, theory and research in dramatherapy. I intend to examine these as well as reviewing the relevance of the study to the field of dramatherapy[181].

With regards to practice, the research has implications for the use of performance as a form of therapeutic intervention, but also as a form of social intervention (Sajnani, Marxen and Zarate, 2017). The research has shown, essentially through its particular design, how the shared space of autobiographical performance creates opportunities for individuals to better understand themselves and others in dialogue and in relation with one another. It represents a form of 'performance of possibilities' that, as Madison (1998, p.277) suggests, 'opens more and different paths for enlivening relations and spaces'. The research therefore indicates how the practice of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy can create spaces of connections and healing to foster interpersonal and intercultural dialogue and understanding.

With regards to theory, the research has shown, firstly, the relevance for dramatherapy of an epistemology that reflects a relational understanding of identity and subjectivity (Pitruzzella, 2017). The research has illustrated how our relationships with others shape the construction of human experience and its meaning. It has shown how otherness provides an 'excess of

[179] See subsection 5.5.4. in the previous chapter Figure 6: Processes of co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance
[180] As outlined in section 2.5. in Chapter 2
[181] As outlined in section 1.2. in Chapter 1

seeing' (Bakhtin, 1990, p.22) that enriches and completes individual experience. The research has illustrated the epistemological point made by Merleau-Ponty that, 'through other eyes we are for ourselves fully visible' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 143). As such, the research suggests a theoretical decentering from the question of the self (Jacques, 1991), and a re-orientation towards alterity and otherness as part of a dramatherapy paradigm. Secondly, the research has shown the overlap between a number of the core processes[182] in dramatherapy (Jones, 1996; 2007; 2012b) to understand the connections made in the shared space of autobiographical performance, and how these can result in significant changes for those involved. Although those processes were referred to in the analysis and the discussion, as opposed to being their foundations, their relevance to the field of autobiographical performance nevertheless represents a theoretical development in their application to performance oriented dramatherapy.

With regards to research, if the study has highlighted the significance of intersubjective relationships in the creation of meaning, it has also shown how these can be asymmetrical and produce reverse effects, especially in the relationship between performers and the external audience. This resulted in a number of ethical questions that have implications for the research of 'performance as ethical practice' (Ridout, 2009, p.54), whereby performers and audience members recognise the ethical significance of their mutual relationship, alongside the ethical responsibility of the researcher. Secondly, if the research has revealed the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach between dramatherapy and the theatre and performance studies to apprehend processes underlying the creation of meaning in autobiographical performance, it has also shown that reciprocal links with other domains of study, such as audience research and the cognitive and neurosciences, significantly enhance the understanding of particular experiences within the field of performance. The research therefore suggests further interdisciplinary bonds for the study of autobiographical performance in dramatherapy.

[182] Most notably the core processes of interactive audience and witnessing, therapeutic performance process, embodiment, dramatherapeutic empathy and distancing, and transformation

6.3. Evaluation and limitations

If the conclusions and implications of the research have summarised its impact on the field of autobiographical performance and beyond, I now evaluate how the framework and design of the research impacted on its outcomes, as well as addressing issues of validity, rigour and trustworthiness.

The strengths of the research mainly reside in four different aspects of its overall design. Firstly, the research has brought into dialogue two different fields of knowledge (Jones, 2012b) around a common question associated with the practice of autobiographical performance. The interdisciplinary nature of the research has enabled a deeper critical understanding and analysis of the object of study. This has been most notably illustrated in the process leading to the identification of the research questions, and in the discussion of the findings. The interdisciplinarity of the research has therefore revealed layers of meaning in the research data that have contributed to significant developments in autobiographical performance research for both fields of study. This was most notably the case by showing the complexity of the witnessing process and of the different audiences in the context of theatre and performance studies, and by describing the particular regulating role of aesthetics between the performer and the witnessing spectator in the context of dramatherapy. Secondly, the interdisciplinarity of the research is also reflected in its methodological framework that has embedded the object of study in the practice of performance but also in the description of the actual experience of performance. The multi-method design of the research has enabled an analysis of the object of study from different but complimentary perspectives. The dialogue between the two different methodological approaches has shed light on processes that might have otherwise been overlooked. This was most notably the case for the role played by the lived body in the experience and creation of autobiographical performance, and for the significance of interpersonal relationships within the research group on the production of performances and their meaning. As such, the research has shown the benefits of a multi-methodological and interdisciplinary approach to the development of the field of autobiographical performance research. Thirdly, the multi-method framework led to the creation of an original model of method of data analysis juxtaposing the different levels of experience within the research group. The model also offered a particular dialogical structure for the cross-validation of the findings. Fourthly, two creative outputs, a film and a play, were produced as forms of representation of a synthesis of the study and of my personal

reflective process as researcher. Both outputs constitute original attempts to use a performance-based framework to communicate aspects of the research (Jones, 2015).

The weaknesses of the research predominantly reside in three aspects of its overall design. Firstly, the methodological framework of the research outlined four criteria of evaluation to determine the trustworthiness and reliability of the findings[183]. Three of these referred to the cross-validation of the research methods and findings, to the transparency of the different stages in the research, and to a critical reflection on my active role as researcher. These have been demonstrated throughout the research process. With regards to the last criteria referring to the involvement of the participants in the analysis of the data and the discussion of the findings, the questionnaire showed some limits as it was not completed evenly across the research participants, and was sent to them a couple of years after the end of the performance workshop. On reflection, a different form of participatory research might have better supported a collaborative engagement of the research participants in the creation of the meaning of the research itself. Secondly, the research was, mainly and purposefully, focused on an investigation of the process of meaning making in autobiographical performance. This has resulted in a lack of consideration for other performance and therapeutic practices, notably in the field of the arts therapies, that have highlighted the significance of relational, aesthetic and embodied processes as part of the creative or therapeutic work (Springham and Huet, 2018; Samaritter and Payne, 2013). Thirdly, the insistence from the onset of the study on the process of co-creation of meaning has given the research a particular orientation[184] that might have influenced the analysis of the data and the findings, as opposed to adopting a more open approach to the meaning making process.

6.4. Recommendations for practice and further research

In the light of the above conclusions, evaluation and limitations of the research, the following recommendations can be suggested:

1. The research produced a particular model embracing aesthetic, embodied and intersubjective processes to conceptualise the way in which meaning can be described as a

[183] See section 3.5. in Chapter 3
[184] Also reflected in the epistemological framework

co-creation in autobiographical performance. Further studies are needed to evaluate the applicability and relevance of such a model to other performance and therapeutic practices.

2. The study was carried out with the primary aim of serving a research function. Further studies are needed to investigate autobiographical performance as a form of therapeutic and social intervention with different client groups and populations, and to evaluate its capacity to bring about change and meaning for performers and witnesses.

3. The research has shown the significance of embodied and non-verbal processes between performers and witnesses in autobiographical performance, and their impact on the production of knowledge and meaning. The interdisciplinary field of performance and cognitive neuroscience creates further opportunities for research to investigate the neurophysiology of the encounter between performer and witness.

4. The research has provided findings on the experience of the witness in autobiographical performance. These have not so much reflected the experience of the witnessing external audience coming to see the performances. Further studies are needed to investigate that particular experience, especially in relation to the notion of ethical care for the audience.

5. The findings of the study emerged from a research group composed of students and alumni. All shared a common interest in autobiographical performance and/or dramatherapy. It remains to be examined whether similar findings would be produced with individuals less invested in the art form of theatre and performance.

6. The study was carried out over a relatively short period of time (20 weeks). The questionnaire sent to the participants, as a way of testing the research findings, indicated that the changes that they experienced might not have been enduring. Additional longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate the long-lasting impact of participating in autobiographical performance on meaning and memory.

It is my hope that this research and its conclusions constitute at the very least a platform to further investigate the co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Research information sheet

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PhD Research Project

Title of the research project:

The co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy

Name of the researcher

Jean-Francois Jacques, Phd research student in the Department of Music and Performing Arts at Anglia Ruskin University. I am invited tutor on the MA Programme in Dramatherapy where I teach Autobiographical Performance. I am also a dramatherapist working as a clinician and clinical supervisor in private practice and in the NHS. I am artistic director of a community theatre company in the town where I live.

Purpose and value of the study:

In the Greek myth of Perseus, the three Graeae share the peculiarity of only having one eye between the three of them; an eye that they need to share and to hold in turns in order to see. Without that eye, they are simply condemned to blindness. In other words, they each need the eye of the other in order to see themselves.

This allegory summarises the epistemological foundation of this research study. Namely, that the 'eye' of the other is a necessary condition for knowledge about oneself, self-understanding, validation and creation of personal identity and meaning. In that sense, meaning appears to be a process that is constantly and relationally negotiated between a narrator and an observer.

The purpose of the study is to investigate this hypothesis in the context of autobiographical performance. The aim of the study is to research the way in which meaning is co-created in

the context of autobiographical performance where participants will successively occupy the positions of performer and witness to other performed self narratives. The purpose is therefore to investigate the effect of that relationship between the two positions on the meaning making process, as well as investigating the effect of different narratives put in relation to one another on the way participants make sense of their own experience.

The value of the study is in exploring meaning as a relational and dialogical process between different performed narratives through a dynamic and mutual relationship between performer and witness. The foundations of the study lie in the way autobiographical performance has contributed to collective awareness raising around a number of social and cultural issues, and to a process of validation and construction of individual identity and experience in the context of dramatherapy. The current study aims at addressing more specifically a gap in research on the significance of the performer-witness relationship in the meaning making process in autobiographical performance.

The study also intends to offer an interdisciplinary analysis and understanding of that relationship, and will therefore be of interest to students in a variety of fields where intersubjective and group processes have been investigated. Students with an interest in dramatherapy, performing art studies, cultural studies, literature studies, communication studies, humanities, philosophy and ethics might find a particular interest in taking part in the study.

Invitation to participate

The research is open to participants who currently are postgraduate students or Alumni from the following Departments at Anglia Ruskin University:

- Music and Performing Arts
- English, Communication, Film and Media
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Cambridge School of Arts
- Education
- Family and Community Studies

I am looking at recruiting 10 participants with an interest in the study and prepared to take part in a 30 weeks research programme aiming at addressing the objectives of the research. The group will meet once a week for 2 hours. The research programme will be spread over two semesters starting in October 2014.

The programme will give each participant an opportunity to explore an aspect of their personal experience through a ten minutes theatrical performance (see ‘design of the study’ below). Participants will be invited to identify an aspect of their experience they feel safe and comfortable to explore in the context of a group with a view of being performed to an audience. Experience in theatre and performance is not essential but desirable given the time frame of the research. Participants will be given opportunities through the project to develop devising and performing skills.

Design of the study

The study will be divided in three consecutive stages each exploring an aspect of the meaning making process in performance and the dynamic relationship between performer and witness. The design of the study will reflect two distinct levels of analysis. The first level of analysis will examine the process of creation of meaning through the performance of self narratives. The second level will examine the process of creation of meaning through group process, engagement with other narratives and relational influences.

The intention is for the 10 participants to be randomly divided into two groups of five. The first stage will be for everyone in each group to devise, direct and perform a piece of autobiographical theatre based on a personal experience of their choice. Each group will then witness the performance of the other group. The second stage will be for each participant in each group to devise a new autobiographical piece based on a response to or connection with one of the performances they will have witnessed. Each group will here again witness the performance of the other group. The third stage will be for each individual in each group to revisit their initial performance based on the response to their own performance that they will have witnessed. The aim of the final performance will be to investigate in what way the response or connection in the second stage influences the initial experience or the way it was staged. The intention is for the three different performances to be open to the public. Participants will also be invited to attend three focus groups (one after each stage) and two individual interviews pre and post project.

What are the benefits from participating in the study

Participants in the study can expect to:

- explore creatively an aspect of their personal experience through group work and performance
- be offered an opportunity for personal and self development
- gain a direct experience and understanding of performance as an embodied mode of knowing about oneself and others
- gain an opportunity to directly experience the dynamic relationship between performer and witness (or narrator and observer) and the way it informs the meaning making process
- gain an understanding of performance-based research
- develop the ability to devise and perform a piece of autobiographical performance
- be part of an interactive, stimulating and creative research project

Are there individual risks involved in the study?

Participants may decide to explore and disclose sensitive and difficult aspects of their personal experience that they may not have been able to work through previously. This might leave participants feeling quite vulnerable and exposed. Participants are to be made aware that the primary aims of the study are not to help participants through their personal difficulties. Participants are therefore to be made aware that they are not joining a therapy group but rather an experiential time limited group with specific aims.

A pre-project individual interview will help clarify with prospective participants the remits of the project as well as their individual expectations. It will help identify participants' support network as well their ability to work with personal experience through performance. Participants will also be made aware of external services they can access for additional emotional support such as ARU counselling service, primary care services or voluntary organisations.

Confidentiality

The information shared by participants about themselves as part of the group work leading to the performances and throughout the project will remain confidential. Yet, participants understand that public performances remain an entire part of the project and something that they will be working towards. As such, they consent to share with an audience aspects of their personal experience. Participants will be able to choose the material of their autobiographical performance as well as the theatrical forms that can provide greater or lesser distance to their personal experience. Participants retain the right to withdraw from the project at any stage.

Selection of participants

Potential participants will be invited to attend a pre-project individual interview to clarify aims and remits of the study, discuss expectations and determine the suitability of the participants in the light of the above risks.

Right to withdraw

Participants are encouraged to commit themselves to the entire programme provided the interdependent nature of the three different stages of the project. Yet, participants have a right to withdraw from the project at any time by informing the researcher of their intention without having to justify themselves in any way.

How will the information / data be collected throughout the project?

Information will be gathered through the participants' performances, three focus groups and two individual interviews with each participant.
Performances will be filmed to help the analysis of data. Focus groups and interviews will be recorded.

What will happen to the information collected and to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be primarily used towards analysis and writing up of the PhD thesis. Participants will not be identified by their real names throughout the analysis. The information gathered as part of the research programme will be securely and safely stored on computer only accessible to the lead researcher.

Audio recording will be destroyed after completion of the thesis. It is to be hoped that the study could eventually be published in an academic journal or in a book. As a significant

element for the purpose of the research, the video recording of the performances could be linked to the publications through a secure, confidential and encrypted web connection. No reference will be made to the names of participants in video recording.

Contact for further information

Jean-Francois Jacques
PhD research student
Faculty of ALSS
Department of Music and Performing Arts
Anglia Ruskin University

Tel:
E-mail:

THANK YOU!

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP
TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX 2: Consent form

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

PhD research project

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: ……..

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: The co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy

Lead researcher and contact details: Jean-Francois Jacques

Supervisors: Ditty Dokter (Department of Music and Performing Arts)
Eirini Kartsaki (Department of Music and Performing Arts)

1. I agree to take part in the above PhD research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that public performance will be a part of the project and I agree to take part in this. I understand how public performance affects the nature of the information I decide to share in the group as part of the research.
3. I understand that the performances will be filmed for data analysis purposes and possibly referred to as part of future publications by the lead researcher. I understand that I will not be identified by my name as an individual in the references made to visual or audio material in the PhD thesis and future publications.

4. I agree for the information collected as part of the study to form part of future publications by the lead researcher.
5. I understand that my commitment to the whole duration of the project is important to the group and the aims of the research. I understand that I commit to a group process that will last about 30 weeks.
6. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice. I agree to inform the lead researcher and the group of change in my life circumstances that may affect my involvement in the research.
7. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide as part my involvement in the group alongside other participants will be safeguarded within the limits mentioned in point 2.
8. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
9. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University[185] processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me

Name of participant (print)……Signed……..Date……

Name of witness (print)……Signed……..Date……

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: The co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name (print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

[185] "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its partner colleges

APPENDIX 3: Pre-project semi-structured interviews questions

10. What made you apply for this research project?

11. What is your understanding of the research project and the 20 weeks workshop?

12. The project involves working from a personal story or experience of your choice and develop it into a short performance piece. What kind of issues could that bring up for you?

13. What would be helpful to help you address these issues?

14. What are your expectations of the project?

15. What are you hoping to gain from it?

16. What kind of anxieties do you have regarding your participation in the research?

17. The project involves working as part of the group and receiving support from the group as well as being supportive of one another. Have you thought about any other ways that may help you address some of your anxieties?

18. One important component of the project is the different public performances. What kind of issues does that bring up for you?

19. What kind of personal difficulties or issues may have an impact on your participation in the project?

20. The research consists of a 20 weeks workshop which will be an unfolding process with a final closure. Your involvement in the whole process is therefore very important. Is there anything that could make it difficult for you to commit to the 20 weeks?

21. Do you have any questions regarding the Information Sheet or the Consent Form?

APPENDIX 4: Post-project semi-structured interviews questions

1. Could you think back when you decided to join the research. Now that the project is completed, what has changed for you?

2. We have now reached the end of a process that started more than 20 weeks ago. You have devised three different performances within a group. You have had a chance to perform and witness other performances? What have you discovered or become aware of at the end of this process? Was it what you were initially expecting and hoping to gain?

3. I am curious about the changes between your three different performances in terms of content and form. Could you tell me a bit more about how you experienced this progression and what it means to you?

4. What do you attribute this progression to? What factors, do you think, contributed to that progression?

5. How would you describe the way in which other performances may have influenced your own performances and your choices?

6. How would you describe your relationship and exchanges with others in your small group and in the larger group? Have these relationships influenced your experience?

5. How did you experience the different public performances and the presence of an audience?

7. Did you notice any emergent themes as part of your process or your work of others? How do you relate to these themes?

8. The research was designed around the notion of meaning in performance and how meaning is produced in performance. Could you first describe the way in which you may have found new meaning(s) through performing?

9. What do you attribute these meanings to?

10. What were for you the most meaningful and significant moments of the project? What made them meaningful and what contributed to them becoming meaningful to you?

11. How would you summarize this project and what stood out for you personally?

APPENDIX 5: Themes from clusters of relevant meaning from post-project individual interview of Participant 1 (Natalia)

I. *Witnessing*

A. ‘Watching other people create’ p.2
B. ‘Watch how they do it’ p.2
C. ‘Watching these stylistic things that they were doing that I had never done before and didn’t necessarily give much credit for then I kind of did it and I really loved it’ p.6
D. ‘I didn’t feel uncomfortable at all watching the group’ p.6
E. ‘When she creates a performance, it's so amazingly raw and open’ p.8
F. ‘Again the one that Louise did where she sat on the floor. I just thought she just opened up her insides and showed her insides to us with no reservation whatsoever. I thought that was so brave and I was terrified’ pp.10-11
G. ‘I was so fascinated by what she did and I found it so powerful’ p.11
H. ‘I could not cope with that level of honesty’ p.11
I. ‘The honesty there again in revealing all these things inside was, I think there were things I wouldn't be able to do’ p.11
J. ‘That's why I was so fascinated about wanting to kind of do a non-traditional performance in that sense. Do things where people experienced things’ p.11
K. ‘If I hadn't watched and enjoyed those I certainly would not have been able to access my own creativity in areas that I hadn't worked in before’ p.12

II. *Being witnessed*

A. ‘when I watched that her second performance I kind of asked myself, I wonder what the connection is here’ p.13
B. ‘I didn't care about being watched but I wanted someone to choose my story’ p.13
C. ‘I just wanted them to say, "I would like to work with her story," because otherwise it would've been like this abandoned child I had given birth to it and nobody wanted it. It was an orphan. I wanted it to be claimed in some way’ p.13
D. ‘this Henry's friend came to me after she watched the second performance. She came and said like how much she found herself in my story’ p.13
E. ‘She had taken the story really literally which of course it wasn't’ p.13
F. ‘then I thought maybe you need a special kind of audience to want to engage with that kind of performance’ p.14
G. ‘I knew that he didn't have the experimental literacy to kind of access and perceive what was being presented’ p.14
H. ‘I never thought they didn't connect with me’ p.14

III. *Resonance*

A. ‘I chose two others which were Jenny and Nathan which were a little bit more manageable for me’ p.11
B. ‘In Nathan’s one, the thing that really did it for me was still the honesty’ p.11
C. ‘I couldn't forget about that poem’ p.17
D. ‘the way that performance went and the way again it had that raw honesty where she just showed us’ p.17

E. ‘the rawness, the honesty, the emotions’ p.17
F. ‘I was willing to connect with that’ p.17
G. ‘Maybe you need that connection to do something well’ p.17
H. ‘Well is the wrong word but to do something powerful and effective’ p.17
I. ‘for me the key is to finding that true connection’ p.18
J. ‘In an autobiographical performance when that connection is there, what’s presented is very powerful and maybe difficult for the audience not to engage with’ p.18

IV. *Dissonance*

A. ‘What I didn't enjoy as much, was the more traditional storytelling within the whole group’ p.16
B. ‘The ones that I didn't connect with were a bit superficial’ p.17
C. ‘That I didn't like’ p.17
D. ‘It wasn't the performance it was but it was like I didn't care’ p.17
E. ‘It was like, "Why are you telling me this? There is nothing here.” p.17
F. ‘I think certainly one of them like that was Karen's Three Bears’ p.17
G. ‘It's the same with Henry's one for example. The first one I really didn't care about it at all. I was like why are you telling us this’ p.17
H. ‘Those two for example were the ones at first I didn't care’ p.17

V. *Interpersonal dimension*

A. ‘I think it was just the exchange of ideas’ p.2
B. ‘in the first session, I was really worried that there could be some of us who could be challenging perhaps for me. It wasn’t like that in the slightest’ p.7
C. ‘Now that we are not in the group, create a performance, I don’t know if I would necessarily like these people if I’d met them outside the group’ p.7
D. ‘When I saw him, I thought, “Oh my God! Oh my God!”’ p.7
E. ‘I made great friends with him and I don’t think he put a foot wrong in any direction’ p.8
F. ‘I think he was likely the best person ever. I really think so’ p.8
G. ‘I was worried about offending her after the second performance’ p.8
H. ‘A lot of the time I find myself misbehaving if there is an authority figure that I think is wrong’ p.8
I. ‘I will resist that. I will be a bit of a grumpy nightmare’ p.8
J. ‘I certainly wasn’t like that but then I liked and respected you’ p.8
K. ‘Immediately I kind of respected you so much’ p.8
L. ‘I don't know if it's the interaction that's creating the meaning but I think it's certainly the route to the meaning’ p.19
M. ‘none of those meanings could have been created without the interaction with the group’ p.19
N. ‘I needed some midwives and nurses and everything to help it come out’ p.19
O. ‘Nobody said anything to me about any of my performances. Neither from the group nor from the audience that made me think wow’ p.20

VI. Elements of surprise

A. ‘I never thought for a second, will people like it or not? It wasn’t an issue’ p.3

B. ‘I wasn’t trying to prove anything, I wasn’t trying to put myself on the map in anyway. I was just exploring within myself’ p.3
C. ‘The funny thing is like when it was born, it wasn’t what I thought it was’ p.5
D. ‘I knew what the idea was but the way it came out was different’ p.5
E. ‘It was very basic whereas I was expecting something very primal that had me in its control’ p.5
F. ‘I was really pleased that it was not this thing that I didn’t know what it was’ p.5
G. ‘It wasn't this enigma at all’ p.5
H. ‘Not in the way that I expected’ p.5

VII. Personal change and meaning

A. ‘I feel very pleased that my idea has been realized’ p.2
B. ‘I feel liberated that what was simmering inside me has come out’ p.2
C. ‘I developed artistically as part of the project’ p.2
D. ‘Maybe I had found what I was looking for and the third performance just solidified it’ p.4
E. ‘I had a knot inside me which I don’t anymore’ p.5
F. ‘I kept saying "I need to give birth to it", and I gave birth to it so that knot is not there anymore’ p.5
G. ‘I did something in the second performance, something I would never ever do and I loved doing it as well’ p.6
H. ‘For me, the main idea that I wanted to work on was actualized in the first performance. For me, the whole process had really finished with the first performance’ p.9
I. ‘I got no idea what to do but if the peak happened with the first then the second one made me look around’ p.9
J. ‘So, rather than being up it was sideways for me, the second performance’ p.9
K. ‘I arrived somewhere after the first performance but then after the second I settled’ p.9
L. ‘I was now a resident in that area and I liked that very much’ p.9
M. ‘I thought, "What I'm going to do is I'm just going to put the two performances together. I'm simply going to tell my story rather than make others acted and maybe that will be me owning everything up." p.9
N. ‘The first one is significant because I was so desperate to tell the story’ p.10
O. ‘with the first performance I still worked in a very, very safe way, in modes and ways that I had done before and I was comfortable’ p.10
P. ‘It's almost like the second one is most significant’ p.10
Q. ‘The second one is significant because I did things I have never thought I was ever going to think of doing’ p.10
R. ‘With the second one, it was the exact opposite. I worked in ways I hadn't done before. I tried new things. I had great fun with it. I loved it’ p.10
S. ‘I was pleased with it but I did not have the same exhilaration like I had after the first and the second having found something’ p.10
T. ‘Maybe it is all about just relaxing into what I found and re-experiencing what I found’ p.10
U. ‘I think maybe just the newness and the joy of doing something new and different. I loved that’ p.12

V. ‘I was able to say what I couldn't say before’ p.13
W. ‘I could say this is my child. I told the story myself. I didn't make up as acted. It's my story’ p.13
X. ‘But I think what I found was too powerful for me to suddenly then repeat and do it. I needed more time and it wasn't there so I just did it in a more traditional way’ p.15
Y. ‘it's now like a little hobby for me that way of performance’ p.16
Z. ‘It's a found form for me’ p.16
AA. ‘the third one of course that was the point that I was owning up my story’ p.20

VIII. Creative language and distance
A. ‘As part of the project I had the opportunity to try out ways of working and ways of performing that I hadn’t done before or I hadn’t really considered’ p.2
B. ‘I really don’t enjoy verbalizing’ p.4
C. ‘I was desperate to find a way, was to explore those in a non-verbal way’ p.4
D. ‘whatever I feel about it I cannot put into words and I don’t want to put it into words’ p.4
E. ‘I desperately crave massive distance from it so this project certainly gave me that opportunity where I had that distance’ p.4
F. ‘I was able to explore things without talking about them directly and that was a great thing for me’ p.4
G. ‘what shifted, I can’t put it into words but then it’s not meant to be I think in words’ p.5
H. ‘I can't put into words. It's just a feeling’ p.18
I. ‘It's all very close and hidden inside me’ p.20

IX. *Meaningful moments*
A. ‘I had these moments that happened to me’ p.4
B. ‘They were like moments of inspiration which were also closely related to moments of great self-awareness but during those moments I was able to create something’ p.4
C. ‘One of those was when I woke up one night and I wrote my story’ p.4
D. ‘The other one was when I was driving in the car’ p.4
E. ‘that was a moment for me in the car travelling to the performance thinking this is how I'm going to tell this’ p.15
F. ‘They were also all very, very close to the performance happening in terms of time. It was as if when I was forced’ p.18
G. ‘The most important thing happens always at the very, very last minute with me in everything’ p.19

X. *Support and structure*
A. ‘We could have artistic freedoms which were very, very supported’ p.2
B. ‘Whereas during this project I was the one who was held and supported by everybody’ p.3
C. ‘That gave me real foundations to then build on comfortably and try different things and not feel judged and not feel persecuted for whatever I might be doing’ p.3

D. ‘the space that you created for us to interact. I was thinking, “What is it that he did to make this possible?” p.7
E. ‘But it was as if you had some kind of magic that you created with us’ p.7
F. ‘Also I think you were very clear about everything’ p.8
G. ‘Whatever it is, the way that you put everything in place must have worked so well because I think there can be a number of challenges in group work, and I don't think anybody had that kind of challenging behaviour’ p.9

APPENDIX 6: Themes from clusters of relevant meaning from post-project individual interview of Participant 2 (Louise)

I. *Witnessing*

A. ‘seeing their progressions and how we actually could get on and work together and share quite personal stuff by the end of it, that helped me progress in my performances’ p.6
B. ‘They felt a lot more open, and less secretive’ p.7
C. ‘When I was watching it, I didn't really think about it as a response to mine’ p.15

II. *Being witnessed*

A. ‘I became a bit more comfortable with the mentality of people watching’ p.3
B. ‘People can't judge me on a performance that's to do with my own experience’ p.3
C. ‘I found it quite comfortable’ p.11
D. ‘A lot of the audience was made with mine and Henry's friends anyway’ p.11
E. ‘There wasn't that many new people in the audience for us, and all the people that were there know me quite personally’ p.11
F. ‘It wasn't like sharing a lot of my life with loads of new people’ p.11
G. ‘I guess, in a way I'm kind of used to being in front of an audience in that kind of setting’ p.11
H. ‘I think having the audience there that were there, they did respond very quickly, and that felt very strange’ p.11
I. ‘It felt ... I don't know how to describe it, but kind of like intrusive, but in a planned way’ p.11
J. ‘The fact that they didn't need pushing to look at my personal stuff was a bit like, oh, they're just happy to do it’ p.11
K. ‘That added a different element for me to what I expected’ p.12
L. ‘It was intrusive, but only to a level’ p.12
M. ‘I think it would have been very different, say if there was people that I knew from University that I know that I'd see again, but didn't know that well’ p.12
N. ‘I don't feel like I got a lot of people responding to mine’ p.13
O. ‘I find it difficult to think about how Henry responded to the performance’ p.14

III. *Resonance*

A. ‘In the beginning, the only one that I could really say that I had identified or felt some sort of connection with was Natalia's’ p.2
B. ‘the first one that I immediately connected to was Natalia's, in the first set, which was the one that I based my second performance on’ p.8
C. ‘I find it really interesting to look at the ones that I connected with, because I connected with some of them for completely different reasons than what they were actually for’ p.8
D. ‘With Natalia's, I really connected with Natalia's, but still have no idea what it was about’ p.8
E. ‘The girl with the thing on her head’ p.8

F. ‘For me it was just like anyone could be in that situation with something that they think is negative, but others see it as positive’ p.8
G. ‘That one was quite different to the others’ p.8
H. ‘It was interesting that she could do something so personal, on a level that no one knew what it was about’ p.8
I. ‘when I look at what I did in the third performance now, without thinking about it, it was definitely influenced from the other performances there’ p.10
J. ‘Even simple things like using the tape, like Jenny had tape in hers’ p.10
K. ‘Using that exhibition, walking around style like Natalia had done in the second performance’ p.10
L. ‘I think the rest of the group's performance definitely influenced the format of my final one’ p.10
M. ‘I found it interesting to watch Jenny performances’ p.10
N. ‘The use of the tape, and showing some sort of kind of captivity, entrapment, that was something that I could take from that, and identify with’ p.10
O. ‘To be honest, in most of the performances, in fact all of them, I think I found at least one point I could connect with, or something I could interpret into something I could connect with’ p. 16

IV. *Interpersonal dimension*

A. ‘For me it was a really good group of people in the way that I knew I wasn't going to be judged for anything’ p.5
B. ‘Even in my small group, I was quite willing to be more open with them’ p.5
C. ‘Everyone was together in this new group’ p.5
D. ‘Everyone was together in sharing opinions on other people's performances’ p.5
E. ‘it helped me that the rest of the group seemed to be quite open, because my tendency is to not be open at all’ p.5
F. ‘I think most of the progression all comes down to the influence of my group’ p.6
G. ‘I could say that I wanted to do something, and they'd be completely supportive of it’ p.6
H. ‘They all went with it and let me explore it, and help me figure out the practical side of it’ p.6
I. ‘Mainly my group’ p.6
J. ‘One of the things that actually helped is that I wasn't grouped with Henry’ p.7
K. ‘To begin with, there was me, Henry, Tania, and Jane, and we all already knew each other to an extent’ p.7
L. ‘I realized that I wasn't in a group with any of the people I already knew, and they were all grouped separately. I think that actually really helped’ p.7
M. ‘If I was in a group with Henry it would have kind of just been me and him hiding behind each other’ p.7
N. ‘I'd have probably been a lot less open if I was in a group with Henry’ p.7
O. ‘I'd just think, well, Henry knows it, or Henry would already know my opinion on this so he can just say it for me’ p.7
P. ‘I'm sitting here now thinking I bet my performance was a lot more obvious than what I thought they were’ p.8
Q. ‘We actually talked about the whole process a lot between the two of us outside of it’ p.14

R. ‘We spent a lot of time discussing our reactions to other people's performances and what we enjoyed, and what we connected with’ p.14
S. ‘It felt like we became a bit of a community’ p.16
T. ‘I'd become more open, and other people around me had started becoming more open, and we'd all got on’ p.16

V. Elements of surprise
A. ‘I definitely identified with performances which I didn't expect to, and that was a surprise’ p.2
B. ‘I think that surprised me because then, since we've stopped doing that, it's been a bit "Oh, I wonder what this person is doing? It's a shame that we're not going to see them," which I never expected at the beginning’ p.2
C. ‘At the start, if someone had told me that would have been my final performance, I would have been like, no way’ p.4
D. ‘There's no way I'd ever do that, and suddenly I was doing it’ p.4
E. ‘When I'd finished it, looking back and being like: ‘how did I get here? From there to here in the 20 weeks that we had?’ p.16

VI. Personal change and meaning
A. ‘When I first started, I couldn't really see myself identifying with the other people in the group’ p.2
B. ‘When I came in, I was never a loud member of the group’ p.3
C. ‘When I came in, I think I was a lot shier to put myself forward’ p.3
D. ‘But since coming away from it, after getting to know people, it was just a different mentality’ p.3
E. ‘I still wasn't loud, but I wasn't shy’ p.3
F. ‘I wasn't scared of the other members of the group or anything’ p.3
G. ‘I wasn't scared of saying my opinions in front of everybody’ p.3
H. ‘Being in that kind of focus group situation has made me more willing to do that outside of the group’ p.3
I. ‘Like working in the group at Uni on a project, I'm more willing to put my ideas across from the way that we worked during the process of the performances’ p.3
J. ‘I think the main thing that changed through my own performances was, again, to do the openness’ p.3
K. ‘I think my first and second performances were still quite contained’ p.3
L. ‘They were private, but what it was about was kind of hidden’ p.3
M. ‘Moving into the third one, I just felt to let it all out there, so I literally did’ p.3
N. ‘Again, it comes down to the openness of everything’ p.3
O. ‘I think pretty much everything or anything that's changed has been to do with the openness, and the progression through my own performances and within the group’ p.3
P. ‘it was pretty much my whole life laid out on stage. It felt quite surreal’ p.4
Q. ‘go from the first performance that was very hidden, to one that was very open’ p.4
R. ‘The third one was like taking that top layer off and just going straight into the, no, this is actually what it is’ p.4
S. ‘The only thing that I can think to say is openness, again’ p.5

T. ‘It just seemed like everything's kind of fitted together and I've not realized it’ p.13
U. ‘I'm definitely glad that I did the performances that I did’ p.13
V. ‘I think that's what really showed me how open I'd become’ p.16
W. ‘We're not being secretive’ p.16
X. ‘After that third performance, it's kind of a rounded off journey’ p.16
Y. ‘For me the meaning comes from when I'm discussing it with someone’ p.17

VII. Risks and safety

A. ‘A lot of the stuff that I had in the performance, it was personal stuff, but I knew that I'd spent time getting things that were appropriately personal’ p.12
B. ‘I knew that there was not going to me anything there that was like horrible, or gave too much about me away’ p.12
C. ‘It was intrusive, but only to a level’ p.12
D. ‘It was open, but to a level of openness’ p.12
E. ‘I spent time going through all the journal entries’ p.12
F. ‘Making sure that I had ones that were okay for show without giving away too much’ p.12
G. ‘It was still controlled’ p.12
H. ‘Because originally when I was talking to Henry about it, I was just going to lay out all my journals, and then I was like, that's a bit too far’ p.12
I. ‘I don't know what people are going to find in there that I probably forgotten that I'd written’ p.12
J. ‘I re-read everything and made sure that it was okay to show’ p.12
K. ‘Say like with my diaries, obviously I've them there all the time, so I have read them before, gone over them, but never with the aim of being like, this is something that people are actually going to see’ p.13
L. ‘This was never intended for anyone to see’ p.13
M. ‘So doing that kind of stuff outside felt very strange to anything that I've ever done before’ p.13

VII. Difficulties

A. ‘the second performance for me was the hardest one to come up with, because obviously I'd identified with Natalia's and chose that one, but I couldn't think of a way to incorporate that into my own’ p.9
B. ‘I still wasn't sure what I was going to do right up to the week before’ p.9
C. ‘It happened by mistake, in that the performance didn't go how I planned it to’ p.10
D. ‘I wasn't going to break out of the tape’ p.10
E. ‘I run out of things to do, because everything had happened too quickly’ p.10
F. ‘It was kind of like a happy accident’ p.10
G. ‘They all responded really quickly’ p.11
H. ‘I was happy that it had gone wrong so I could get that part into it’ p.11
I. ‘I would like to prepare more for it’ p.13
J. ‘I didn't rehearse and look into specific details like I could have done’ p.13

VIII. *Support and structure*

A. ‘As much as you were overseeing, but at the same time kind of self-led in the performance aspect’ p.5
B. ‘It came, originally, from the very next session, when we had the cushions set out and we were going through talking about our performances. By the time I got to the end, I was like, I just know what I need to do’ p.10
C. ‘I don't know if it was the phrase that you used, or someone else used’ p.10
D. ‘With that phrase I was like, I know what I need to do to round off the two that were done previously’ p.10

APPENDIX 7: Themes from clusters of relevant meaning from post-project individual interview of Participant 3 (Sophie)

I. *Witnessing*

A. ‘I think through witnessing others’ performance that almost gave me permission to break the restrictions that I put upon myself’ p.2
B. ‘I was able to release the safety catch’ p.2
C. ‘and sort of put myself more out there I think’ p.2
D. ‘But after witnessing the first performances I really liked the impact that some of the other performances had through the use of the voice, and vocals’ p.5
E. ‘With Wei Chu for example, she had a lot of pre-recorded stuff but she also used her voice, and screamed and shouted, and I found that incredibly effective’ p.5
F. ‘But after witnessing other people when they had used the voice and shouted and screamed it was almost like I had permission to do it myself’ p.5
G. ‘So I included that in the second one with the pre-recorded’ p.5
H. ‘Then in the final one I sang as well, and again that was inspired by Henry, and also Louise pieces who used their voices and singings’ p.6
I. ‘So I did use elements of other people’s’ p.6
J. ‘it was nice having it in those three stages because I needed that time to almost build up my own confidence’ p.6
K. ‘And to give myself permission to use elements that I wouldn’t have been comfortable with using in the first session, in the first performance’ p.6
L. ‘I think through witnessing other people, I felt quite privileged that others were able to share parts of their life with me’ p.6
M. ‘Yeah, so I felt privileged to bear witness, and I think it produced inspiration for me to share a little bit more’ p.6
N. ‘It felt like it was a break even relationship’ p.6
O. ‘It felt like a dialogue’ p.6
P. ‘You know, I talk and someone else would listen, and then someone else will talk back’ p.6
Q. ‘So it was building up a trust and support as well because a lot of the things that were shown were so personal that there was definitely a trust in the audience that they were witnessing’ p.6
R. ‘I felt that people were trusting me with their stuff’ p.6
S. ‘But then it was great to be able to produce feedback to others. And to sort of help them as well I think’ p.6
T. ‘And it was quite interesting as the weeks progressed that people fed back that they had been inspired by the feedback from us witnessing’ p.6
U. ‘And so I think for the whole group that was an integral part of the sessions, the witnessing but also the feedback that we gave afterwards’ p.6
V. ‘I didn’t want to use my voice, but once I saw other people use their voice then it was okay’ p.8
W. ‘it was nice for me as a witness to see something that I wasn’t involved in as well and I hadn’t been involved in the process’ p.10
X. I think that it inspired me’ p.10
Y. ‘I gave me confidence to see someone else do it first’ p.10

Z. ‘And I think as I said before it gave me permission to sort of do it’
AA. ‘Everyone will recognize things in your performance that perhaps someone else doesn’t recognise because everyone has their own personal history’ p.14

II. *Being witnessed by the other participants*

A. ‘I think it did provide some insight as well like some people in reflection said that there was some vulnerable times and stuff’ p.3
B. ‘That’s probably a word that I wouldn’t feel comfortable applying it to myself because vulnerability implies weakness’ p.3
C. ‘It’s not something I would normally admit to out loud because I tend to shield myself from those certain things’ p.3
D. ‘It was quite interesting hearing it’ p.3
E. ‘I was able to acknowledge that’ p.3
F. ‘That was very powerful for me’ p.3
G. ‘Through the feedback I received, I was able to play with that a little bit’ p.4
H. ‘It was about a relationship’ p.4
I. ‘You know, I talk and someone else would listen, and then someone else will talk back’ p.6
J. ‘And so it felt like I had shared something, and then they had shared something so then I could just share a little bit more’ p.6
K. ‘And it was interesting to have the feedback as well because you know through the people witnessing mine I received feedback which helped me I think grow’ p.6
L. ‘I shared and they would share. It was quite even’ p.6
M. ‘it makes me feel good to think that perhaps there was a moment in that in my piece that inspired her to actually explore her own in a journey, and to be able to say it’ p.11
N. ‘I don’t think Nathan’s was helpful’ p.12
O. ‘I think it made me feel less isolated in my own personal experiences because someone else had recognized and witnessed something in mine’ p.12
P. ‘They were then able to share it in a way that I could understand’ p.12
Q. ‘I think I felt a little bit disappointed that it wasn’t because she connected with my piece’ p.12
R. ‘but mine weren’t one of the ones that were selected’ p.12

III. *Being witnessed by the audience*

A. ‘It was really interesting, especially in the final performance when we had the audience feedback written on some scraps of paper’ p.3
B. ‘Some of the feedback that I received, I hadn’t recognized myself’ p.3
C. ‘When I heard it I was like yes that’s absolutely right’ p.3
D. ‘I was like yeah that’s exactly what it is’ p.3
E. ‘That’s exactly what I was feeling, and wanted to portray’ p.3
F. ‘That was really interesting that other people’s perceptions were exactly what I wanted to get across without realizing that was what I wanted to get across’ p.3
G. ‘I was really pleased with that feedback’ p.3
H. ‘I was like okay, so this is actually what I had intended without realizing that that is what the intention was’ p.3

I. ‘Feedback from the audience and from the group’ p.4
J. ‘I think it’s because I opened it up to the audience’ p.4
K. ‘I was playing to the audience, I was acknowledging them, and I was sharing my story with them’ p.4
L. ‘It was about telling people about a part of me’ p.4
M. ‘And so it was a sharing’ p.4
N. ‘At the same time I was prepared to share as much as I wanted to’ p.4
O. ‘But then one of the feedback that I got from the audience was all great apart from the song’ p.7
P. ‘And I know the audience member in question’ p.7
Q. ‘It was just that she didn’t feel like it fitted in what I was doing’ p.7
R. ‘At first it was like, hang on, I don’t like that feedback’ p.7
S. ‘And then I just thought actually, I don’t care’ p.7
T. ‘I had couple people that I know in the audience, and a couple of people that haven’t seen me perform before’ p.9
U. ‘He did come to the first one. That was really nice’ p.9
V. ‘He didn’t come to the last one, and I just thought that’s such a shame because I felt that was the one I really opened up on’ p.9
W. ‘I was a little bit gutted’ p.10
X. ‘At the same time I was relieved because I was like “well perhaps there is something that I don’t want to show him, and I don't’ want everyone to know”’ p.9
Y. ‘I was able to probably enjoy the performance more, in a way, because I wasn’t thinking oh gosh so and so is here watching’ p.9
Z. ‘I didn’t factor the audience, who was going to make up the audience into my performance’ p.9
AA. ‘I factored in that there was going to be an audience, but not who the audience was’ p.10

IV. *Resonance*

A. ‘I think that Henry’s performance was a song and a video of his time at university impacted on my performance in the sense of the theme of it’ p.11
B. ‘I think that was probably inspired by the theme of Henry’s that was very much about people that he encountered’ p.11
C. ‘The theme of it was quite ambiguous. And so I think that definitely had an impact’ p.11
D. ‘I think I connected with most of them to be honest’ p.12
E. ‘I really enjoyed Natalia's second piece, and enjoyed the journey’ p.12
F. ‘It was just really surprising because it wasn’t what I expected at all’ p.12
G. ‘But something I realized I think was that I was inspired by all of them’ p.12
H. ‘Everything I think was affecting what I was doing’ p.12
I. ‘It just wasn’t just the one or two that I had selected’ p.12
J. ‘It was the process as a whole, and so it was all of the performances’ p.12
K. ‘There was some perhaps that resonated more so than others’ p.12
L. ‘They all did to a certain extent’ p.12
M. ‘Even Nathan’ p.12

V. *Dissonance*

A. ‘I was really disappointed because I didn’t feel that there was a response to mine in it’ p.11
B. ‘He sort of had an agenda of what he wanted to do before he started’ p.11
C. ‘I’m not sure I saw how mine influenced his, and if it did. I was a little bit disappointed I think’ p.11
D. ‘but then I don’t feel that his was really much in response to mine’ p.12

VI. *Interpersonal dimension*

A. ‘I think it really helped having a relationship with the group first, and having the group input in the preparation for the performance’ p.4
B. ‘I had already shared it’ p.4
C. ‘I had already received some feedback’ p.4
D. ‘It became very playful with the group’ p.4
E. ‘I really enjoyed it because I had members of my group in my performance’ p.4
F. ‘It helped me to maintain that playful element which I hope I was able to portray to the audience’ p.4
G. ‘Then the others were like ‘oh my God, that’s a great story’” p.5
H. ‘Then they suggested a different performance idea’ p.5
I. ‘That's what sparked that idea’ p.5
J. ‘That was very much you know helped by the group, and their feedback’ p.5

VII. Personal change and meaning

A. ‘I have seen a change’ p.2
B. ‘Everything gravitated towards it, and I think this project helps me realize that there is more to me, and to my history than this one event’ p.2
C. ‘I realized that this one event doesn’t define me and my whole make up as person I suppose’ p.2
D. ‘That has really helped me sort of move on for that, and leave that other event behind’ p.2
E. ‘The process, the 20 weeks, helped me recognize that there was a way, and I did’ p.2
F. ‘I think I realized that I always try and play it safe if it's a performance about myself’ p.2
G. ‘I think that was demonstrated through the progression of the three performances that I became more open’ p.3
H. ‘I started doing things that I hadn’t done in the previous performances’ p.3
I. ‘I also sung which is something that I’ve never done before’ p.3
J. ‘It was only in reflection that I realized what happened’ p.3
K. ‘It was a completely unconscious progress I suppose’ p.3
L. ‘I think I did develop a better understanding of myself and I suppose the restrictions that I sort of put upon myself’ p.3
M. ‘I think it’s very easy for a voice to be misinterpreted, which is perhaps why I didn’t want to use it in the first performances because voice is very powerful’ p.13
N. ‘And so in order to avoid disappointment, I try to not use it’ p.13
O. ‘I have that sense of empowerment at the end, that sense of achievement’ p.13

P. ‘And I did it, I completed it’ p.13
Q. ‘It was very empowering, yeah’ p.14
R. ‘It just made me realize that all stories, all memories are stories, and they are potentially good stories’ p.14
S. ‘I think that is something that I learned is that you can’t assume other people, the experiences of other people have had, because actually you’re not even going to be able to come close to guessing, I think’ p.14
T. ‘I think that the meaning changes with every performance that you do, and with every witness that sees it’ p.14
U. ‘Because everyone’s encounter of the same performance will be different’ p.14
V. ‘I think everybody will have their own meaning, and what’s nice about having the feedback is that those meanings are shared, and experienced’ p.15
W. ‘That, in a way, can create a new meaning for the performer. That’s what I found’ p.15
X. ‘My piece, especially the final one when we got the feedback for example, I knew what the meaning was but I might not have been able to put it into words’ p.15
Y. ‘But through receiving the feedback from others, it gave me meaning to my performance, and I thought yes that’s it, that’s what I meant (flick of fingers), but I didn’t recognise that at the time’ p.15
Z. ‘I think that the meaning has been constantly evolving’ p.15
AA. ‘Even now looking back on it’ p.15
BB. ‘Even talking about it now I think the meaning has already changed, and I recognize new things’ p.15
CC. ‘I guess I’m talking about it in a different way’ p.15

VIII. Artistic choices and process

A. ‘In the first performance, for example, I didn’t actually use my voice at all’ p.3
B. ‘Everything was pre-recorded’ p.3
C. ‘In the second performance I shouted’ p.3
D. ‘Then in the third performance I used my voice’ p.3
E. ‘Looking back, it looks like that was sort of artistically planned or something, but no it wasn’t. It was natural’ p.3
F. ‘I was really pleased with my performance, all 3 of them, and I really enjoyed performing’ p.4
G. ‘so I chose an adventure theme, which I did follow through all three performances’ p.5
H. ‘Then I thought about a different way that I could produce and I liked the narrations’ p5
I. ‘So I pre-recorded my voice for the first performance’ p.5
J. ‘And also, because time is limited what I wouldn’t have to learn any lines’ p.5
K. ‘Then I continued that through to the second one’ p.5

IX. *Meaningful moments*

A. ‘I saw the audience for the first time as an actor, and so that was quite a revelation’ p.7
B. ‘And I realized I’ve got an audience here’ p.7
C. ‘I’m performing to an audience’ p.7

D. ‘And I felt like I had welcomed them in’ p.7
E. ‘So I think that was probably a moment in the first one’ p.7
F. ‘I really enjoyed doing the song because that was something I haven’t done, I haven’t sung on stage for years’ p.7
G. ‘So I really enjoyed that’ p.7
H. ‘And also I really enjoyed just putting the face paint on’ p.7
I. ‘I felt like I was in control’ p.7
J. ‘Like I had done everything I had been afraid of’ p.7
K. ‘I had gone up and I sang on the stage, I had used my real voice’ p.7
L. ‘I felt like I was honouring myself when I just felt right I am ready’ p.7
M. ‘And so I just got rid of my fears, and that was almost like the confidence coming through’ p.7
N. ‘And then that was it that was the end. So yeah’ p.7
O. ‘I almost feel like I have to have permission to do things’ p.8

X. *Support and structure*

A. ‘for the first performance we were telling a random story with no apparent significance, and others gave us a metaphor, performance idea or phrase’ p.5
B. ‘then it made me realize that any story was significant and had performance value’ p.5
C. ‘then in that same session we had explored fairy tales in different narration, and it was interesting how different stories, and themes appeared out of one story’ p.5

APPENDIX 8: Themes from clusters of relevant meaning from post-project individual interview of Participant 4 (Nathan)

I. *Witnessing*

A. ‘I remember the first performances, I was so impressed with what everyone did’ p.11
B. ‘I didn't understand some of those first performances until quite a lot later on in the project’ p.12
C. ‘At the time, it was more just like, wow, all this stuff is happening, and just taking it in’ p.12
D. ‘For my second performance, what I took was Sophie's brimming over with enthusiasm’ p.12
E. ‘More like the trajectory of her piece, becoming more autonomous and powerful in her ability to help others on their way, and this kind of thing’ p.12
F. ‘That was the energy that I took from her piece’ p.12
G. ‘That was what I was trying to do then, for my second performance, but it didn't work’ p.12
H. ‘It just felt a bit forced’ p.12
I. ‘I just liked it’ p.12
K. ‘I enjoyed that spirit. Yeah’ p.12
L. ‘I was preoccupied with how to try and get the same spirit into the second piece’ p.13
M. ‘I was consciously trying to do that’ p.13
N. ‘When Natalia brought the masks in, I was really attracted to the masks’ p.13
O. ‘That first performance, I thought was like, "Wow, she's really going somewhere. That's great." p.14

II. *Being witnessed*

A. ‘I have no idea, really, what they came across like’ p.6
B. ‘I know where it came from. Henry says, try harder to do something a bit more ...’ p.6
C. ‘Yeah, that comment from someone that second performance, someone in the audience’ p.6

III. *Resonance*

A. ‘I don't think that had much of an influence on what I did in terms of what I was making’ p.13
B. ‘I think maybe Natalia's second one, in terms of inviting people through an experience’ p.13
C. ‘I don't think I found anything in anyone's stories that ...’ p.13
D. ‘I was more responding to the energy of people's performances than the specifics or any particular detail of their life is like’ p.13
E. ‘Was it first performance, Sophie's first performance?’ p.13
F. ‘I think she peaked quite soon in terms of the energy that I'm talking about’ p.13
G. ‘That was the energy that I wanted to find a way to ... Yeah’ p.14
H. ‘I was just thinking about Jenny’ p.14

I. ‘Jenny did a lot of moving about, it's very physical’ p.14

IV. *Interpersonal dimension*

A. ‘I certainly found it a creative space to work with other people’ p.4
B. ‘You can build a wonderful, creative ethos as a group of people, and after the workshop is over, that kind of dissipates’ p.4
C. ‘I might ask if they want to join the workshop that I'm setting up’ p.4
D. ‘I don't think I could have made the piece without that group’ p.5
E. ‘It's about company’ p.5
F. ‘The idea of having a band of collaborators to make work with is just brilliant’ p.5
G. ‘I don't actually know where the ideas come from’ p.7
H. ‘For me, I think it's much more about finding people to open stuff out, and be creative with’ p.7
I. ‘If I didn't invite the audience to dance with me, then I'd wonder what would happen at the end’ p.7
J. ‘That felt like a natural thing to happen at the end’ p.7
K. ‘It's like a celebration of togetherness or something’ p.7
L. ‘I find it a lot easier to be together, to have that feeling with other people, when there's some kind of aim or thing to work towards’ p.9
M. ‘Like it's helpful to me to have a performance group, a weekly performance group’ p.11
N. ‘Then I guess, in terms of working with a group, then it seemed to be just a case of saying, yes, and trying to find ways to ...’ p.11
O. ‘I really enjoy that kind of group work’ p.11

V. *Element of surprise*

A. ’Really?’ p.6
B. ‘Not surprised, no. I don't know. I just kind of like going along’ p.6
C. ‘Wow, blimey. I'm going to be thinking about this for a while, I think’ p.14
D. ‘It's really interesting, isn't it? Bloody hell’ p.15

VI. *Personal change and meaning*

A. ‘I don’t know’ p.2
B. ‘What has changed?’ p.2
C. ‘Something feels maybe… (hesitation)’ p.2
D. ‘I don't think I could've got to that point without being part of your project’ p.2
E. ‘Although, I've been thinking about that, doing something like that for ages, I haven't been able to make it happen’ p.2
F. ‘I want to say it's something like ...’ p.3
G. ‘What am I going to say?’ p.3
H. ‘My feeling is that I know myself pretty well’ p.3
I. ‘I don't think there was any revelations from inside, if that makes sense’ p.3
J. ‘Then, really pleased to discover movement in the last one’ p.6
K. ‘I don't even know where that came from. I can't even remember’ p.6
L. ‘That's probably what happened, I just really wanted to dance’ p.6
M. ‘I found it enjoyable’ p.7
N. ‘I enjoyed the dancing, definitely’ p.7

O. ‘I don't feel like I discovered anything about myself’ p.11
P. ‘I don't feel like there was a revelation, or if there was, it's all kind of practical stuff’ p.11
Q. ‘And I discovered that I like to dance, which I kind of knew already, but I hadn't really tried it out’ p.11
R. ‘It is quite new’ p.14
S. ‘Just being physically in space with other people, that is the ...’ p.15
T. ‘That is the primary kind of physical ... That comes before language’ p.15
U. ‘Yeah, what does all this mean? [laugh] Does it mean I'm like a dancer? [laugh]’ p.15
V. ‘And kind of liberating, I think’ p.15
W. ‘I'm quite attracted to the idea that something could have quite few words’ p.15
X. ‘Movement could communicate so much anyway, and replace a lot of words, really’ p.16
Y. ‘It's quite a poetic kind of form’ p.16
Z. ‘I find words a bit off putting sometimes’ p.16
AA. ‘maybe movement is an easier way to ...’ p.16
BB. ‘I feel that it's quite confrontational to stand up in front of the audience and address the audience straight away’ p.16
CC. ‘The movement is more a gentle way to invite people to kind of spectate’ p.16

VII. *Achievements*

A. ‘Then obviously I did finish it, which is very good’ p.9
B. ‘That's why I'm happy’ p.9
C. ‘Yeah. It was really good. I really enjoyed it’ p.9
D. ‘In a way, finishing it is an achievement’ p.9

VIII. *Hopes*

A. ‘I basically want that workshop to carry on’ p.3
B. ‘I'd be well up for carrying on with it, really’ p.5
C. ‘Maybe you can have a rolling company’ p.5
D. ‘It's one of those experiences where I think, yes, it's great, I'd love to do this just on an ongoing basis’ p.5
E. ‘This could be really useful, on an ongoing way’ p.9
F. ‘The thing I'm most interested in is building towards a really ongoing collaborative performance workshop’ p.9
G. ‘I used to be quite pleased when I finished something or achieved something, but now I'm just like, "Well, I would rather it carried on" p.9
H. ‘What I want to do is make something like that that's ongoing’ p.9
I. ‘I want to be with a group of people doing stuff, creative stuff’ p.10

IX. *Difficulties*

A. ‘These questions are hard already’ p.3
B. ‘I think it probably is over’ p.5
C. ‘I remember some of the earlier sessions, then, I was struggling to hang in there’p.8
D. ‘I still get really tired, sometimes’ p.8

E. ‘I'm still liable to getting depressed’ p.8
F. ‘I remember one session where I turned up and I wasn't really able to take part properly’ p.8
G. ‘I know that I missed a few sessions in there along the 20 weeks’ p.8
H. ‘When I was just too tired or I didn't think it was a good idea’ p.8
I. ‘I felt like I was just getting into a routine with it’ p.9
J. ‘I think I was just starting to feel like, yeah, this could be really useful’ p.9
K. ‘Even if I wasn't 100%’ p.9
L. ‘I found the last session really quite difficult, because it was like a post mortem. That's my feeling about it’ p.9
M. ‘Knowing that that was the end, I was a bit like, "Why are we here?" p.10
N. ‘I didn't really want to hear what everyone had to say about how upset they were about that women’ p.10
P. ‘Because it was the last session, there's no point in saying that’ p.10
Q. ‘I've got no idea. I've got no idea’ p.10
R. ‘I don't know. I don't know’ p.10
S. ‘It all seems quite abstract’ p.10
T. ‘I don't know’ p.11
U. ‘I don't know. I honestly don't know’ p.11
V. ‘I don't know, what else could I say?’ p.11
W. ‘I'm not trying to be …. holding anything back’ p.11
X. ‘Yeah, I can't think of anything’ p.11
Y. ‘I don't know where that's come from, really’ p.14
Z. ‘I don't know if I can articulate it’ p.16
AA. ‘I don't know. Yeah. I don't know’ p.18
BB. ‘We're going quite abstract again’ p.18

APPENDIX 9: Themes from clusters of relevant meaning from post-project individual interview of Participant 5 (Karen)

I. *Witnessing*

A. ‘It was nice experiencing and witnessing’ p.3
B. ‘I think in the very first performances, I did really well at being a witness’ p.4
C. ‘Being behind the sound and lighting desk, I think whether knowingly or unknowingly, there was a bit of distance that I put there’ p.4
D. I don't know if that was on purpose or if it was a matter of fact trying to work the lights and the sound’ p.4
E. ‘But I did find myself at some point finding that extra distance a little bit calming’ p.4
F. ‘At other points I really wanted to get into it’ p.4
G. ‘And so I'd walk down and I'd go and sit closer on certain things that I wanted to experience more wholly’ p.4
H. ‘I realized that actually there were points when I would put myself to the side a little bit’ p.4
I. ‘There was a metaphorical distance as well as actually being slightly further away’ p.4
J. ‘There were times when I just wanted to be close to it’ p.4
K. ‘I think I was relatively comfortable with everybody’ p.4
L. ‘I think though there were probably people I was more comfortable with so I wanted to be closer to theirs’ p.4
M. ‘And then other people who I maybe found some of it a bit more difficult or cringy or something, I would move myself back’ p.4
N. ‘I perhaps distanced myself a little bit from it because I didn't want to put a judgement onto it’ p.6
O. ‘I didn't want to be thinking negative things about it’ p.6
P. ‘I thought if I possibly distance myself a little bit then I can be a neutral witness’ p.7
Q. ‘I didn't want to put judgement on somebody else's thing so I tried to take myself back a bit I think’ p.7
R. ‘The confusion, yeah’ p.9
S. ‘Initially, I don't think I would have even touched the subject of my dyslexia because actually I know it was an autobiographical performance but it's so personal’ p.9
T. ‘I don't think without Jenny having evoked that in me, I don't think I would have done it’ p.9
U. ‘I think Sophie's also stood out for me in the sense that it was all very positive and it felt very uplifting the journey that she went on’ p.13
V. ‘She did influence my second performance as well but not as greatly as Jenny did’ p.13
W. ‘I think Henry's very last performance stood out to me a lot and gave me a sense of meaning in terms of the end of the process’ p.13
X. ‘It was such an interesting piece that it felt as well like a shame that that was the last one’ p.13

Y. ‘It felt very deep and it felt like he'd shown quite a lot of himself in a really different way’ p.13
Z. ‘That really stood out to me’ p.13
AA. ‘It reminded me of own pieces showing the dyslexia, the invisible thing and making it big and real’ p.13
BB. ‘Being able to witness it in itself had an influence on me’ p.15

II. *Being witnessed by the other participants*

A. ‘Witnessing other people's performances enabled me to go further with my own performances’ p.8
B. ‘To go deeper with knowing that other people were able to feel comfortable enough to show themselves’ p.8
C. ‘It made me want to do the same even more so’ p.8
D. ‘So that spurred me on to want to not necessarily do better, that's not the right word’ p.8
E. ‘But because everybody had shown so much of themselves, I wanted to also be able to honour that by showing more of myself’ p.8
F. ‘I remember Henry saying that he felt really frustrated. That was kind of my aim’ p.9
G. ‘That's pretty amazing and special that somebody wants to incorporate even just one small element of your piece into theirs’ p.13
H. ‘It feels like an honour to have that happens if that is what happened’ p.13
I. ‘My first performance evoked something for her’ p.13

III. *Being witnessed by the audience*

A. ‘I think last week I kept mentioning about that comment that threw me off in the written down bits of paper’ p.3
B. ‘And then just that one comment from an outsider's perspective which wasn't really that bad’ p.3
C. ‘It was just I found it bad whether or not it was meant that way’ p.3
D. ‘So when something that felt like it was crushing or upsetting, it upset me more’ p.3
E. ‘It had more of an impact’ p.3
F. ‘I just didn't feel as anxious with these ones’ p.5
G. ‘I don't know if it was because of being more comfortable in the group, feeling more supported by the group’ p.5
H. ‘I think another factor was that it wasn't marked’ p.5
I. ‘For me it probably took away a fair amount of anxiety’ p.5
J. ‘It felt like a nice process and not a daunting one or a pressured one’ p.5
K. ‘I think that was tough’ p.5
L. ‘And then when I'd come up with it, it was almost like that person's comment confirmed I shouldn't have done it’ p.5
M. ‘And that it did bring more of the anxiety back into the situation’ p.5
N. ‘But actually, I think maybe if that had come before in the second performance, I don't think it would have phased me that comment’ p.5
O. ‘But I think because it came then’ p.5

P. ‘Because then somebody was negative and I'm not quite at that place of being really, really, really positive yet’ p.5
Q. ‘It just took more of a toll’ p.5
R. ‘Up until the third, I didn't feel as much anxiety’ p.6
S. ‘And I didn't feel any anxiety until right after the third performance when I read the comments’ p.6
T. ‘I think that brought it back in’ p.6
U. ‘It made me think at that moment when I read that I thought, I was annoyed and then I was angry’ p.6
V. ‘And then it made me think well I can't’ p.6
W. ‘Obviously because somebody is questioning my creativity’ p.6
X. ‘If they think that's not autobiographical because I showed a video of myself. Well then, surely I'm not good enough’ p.6
Y. ‘It kind of made me think that way’ p.6
Z. ‘But having had more time to think about it and to get it off my chest last week in the closing I think I have realized that's just somebody else's opinion’ p.6
AA. ‘And it's not everybody's and I have to look for my own opinions and what would I do’ p.6
BB. ‘Although, it's still a bit annoying in the back of my head’ p.6
CC. ‘Last week it was just right in the forefront and it wouldn't go away, I just couldn't wipe it away’ p.6
DD. ‘Now I'm feeling a lot better about it’ p.6
EE. ‘And in a way only I can tell myself if I'm good enough or not and not somebody else writing on a bit of paper’ p.6
FF. ‘I think that the audience did also give meaning to the piece as well, particularly in the second performance and the third’ p.12

IV. *Resonance*

A. ‘Seeing everybody's different approaches to it was what resonated’ p.7
B. ‘I think the theme of a journey was in everybody's, the process itself was a journey’ p.7
C. ‘Being asked to base our second performance on a piece that we saw perhaps made even more connections’ p.7
D. ‘They still seemed to all end up having slight elements of everybody else's piece in them’ p.7
E. ‘Because mine was influenced quite a lot by Jenny and her use of sound and also that disorientating feeling that she gave everybody with the blindfolds’ p.8
F. ‘That resonated with me because of what I had experienced from my own piece in doing that and what I saw in his’ p.13
G. ‘I felt a connection to his’ p.13
H. ‘Something I experienced was very different but the idea of it, the invisibility of something, was quite profound for me’ p.13
I. ‘It feels like there was a connectedness’ p.13
J. ‘I found it really helpful and meaningful because it came from somebody else, it was evoked by somebody else’ p.15

V. *Dissonance*

A. ‘It was just there were certain ways that they did things that were different to how I would do things’ p.6
B. ‘I guess the tension wasn't as much tension as it was differences and noticing the differences’ p.6
C. ‘you really did get stuck in the more talking part of it’ p.12
D. ‘Because that person didn't do that’ p.12
E. ‘My group did things differently’ p.12
F. ‘I found the small group helpful in some ways and a hindrance in others’ p.12
G. ‘I think that was only because of somebody's personality being something that I was uncomfortable with’ p.14
H. ‘It was just certain ways that I struggled with sometimes’ p.14

VI. *Interpersonal dimension*

A. ‘there were times when people didn't always get on but it never felt that anybody made anybody else feel insecure’ p.2
B. ‘people became normal as I got to know them more and more’ p.2
C. ‘I think actually the group and the supportiveness has probably helped me in other situations where I've met new people’ p.2
D. ‘I felt so supported by the group and everything’ p.3
E. ‘Because of the group being supportive, I think I let myself feel more positive’ p.3
F. ‘I suppose in that first week it was quite a bigger group and there were so many different kinds of people’ p.6
G. ‘The one person who I initially was quite uneasy about remained there for the rest of the process’ p.6
H. ‘I was able to kind of able to get to know them better’ p.6
I. ‘But also as soon as I was able to kind of match them up with somebody I already knew in my life. I'd go, oh okay, they remind me of that person’ p.6
J. ‘It didn't really hinder me’ p.7
K. ‘After a while I think I just got used to that person's way and then it was fine’ p.7
L. ‘I think it actually made the group cohesion better’ p.7
M. ‘After that first performance, I think the group felt more together’ p.7
N. ‘I think I felt more comfortable in the bigger group as a whole’ p.11
O. ‘There were times in the smaller group that I felt comfortable and there were times when I felt uncomfortable’ p.11
P. ‘It was more that I think like I said before, other people's approaches to certain things were so different’ p.11
Q. ‘And it was just a different way than what I was used to working’ p.11
R. ‘It just felt like at times it got stuck’ p.12
S. ‘When we came back together in a big group, I felt more comfortable as everybody was a lot more active and physical as a whole group’ p.12
T. ‘So that helped quite a lot’ p.12
U. ‘I think the whole group made me find more meaning in myself and in the process whereas the smaller group maybe hindered that a little bit’ p.12
V. ‘it was a collaborative process’ p.14
W. ‘In quite a number of years, I've not felt that comfortable in a group’ p.14

VII. *Element of surprise*

A. ‘I think I felt more comfortable in the group than I thought I would’ p.2
B. ‘That was quite a surprise for me’ p.2
C. ‘I think I was pleasantly surprised by everybody and how everybody got on’ p.2
D. ‘There was no judgement’ p.2
E. ‘There was a lot of working together which was really nice, which I hadn't experienced before’ p.2
F. ‘I think that opened up a different side for me that I wasn't expecting’ p.2
G. ‘I was pleasantly surprised and really happy about that’ p.2
H. ‘That's interesting’ p.4
I. ‘Something which I hadn't thought about until just now’ p.4
J. ‘There were still points when I found that performance very different to what I expected people to be doing’ p.6

VIII. Personal change and meaning

A. ‘I don't generally involved that many people in my performance about my autobiographical stuff’ p.3
B. ‘I've never really involved people that much in it but the one when I did the middle one’ p.3
C. ‘They weren't present on stage but they were making sounds. That was a big step for me’ p.3
D. ‘Also the idea about letting other people into that part’ p.3
E. ‘And also I invited the audience on the stage and stuff like that’ p.3
F. ‘For me, that was quite a big thing’ p.3
G. ‘In the past wanting to kind of separate my autobiographical stuff from anybody else participating in it’ p.3
H. ‘And now I'm quite happy to have people slowly’ p.3
I. ‘I think it will get better in time if I did it again, I'd probably let more people in’ p.3
J. ‘Now I'm more positive and sometimes that make the impact of the other things more pertinent than it was before’ p.3
K. ‘But it's changed’ p.3
L. ‘I've changed the way I think that I interact and I don't always expect the negative for myself’ p.3
M. ‘I'm expecting positive things for myself more’ p.3
N. ‘I think it helps me realize even more my want to help other people's voices be heard’ p.4
O. ‘And help encourage people where they might be unsure of their own idea’ p.4
P. ‘But showing them that actually that idea is a good idea and they don't dismiss it by having negative bad things about their own thing’ p.4
Q. ‘Afterwards, I was so happy’ p.5
R. ‘I really enjoyed how it had gone and I thought that it went the best that it could’ p.5
S. ‘That was really interesting how the middle one seemed to be for me, the best one’ p.5
T. ‘With my second performance, I found a new meaning’ p.8

U. ‘In rather than trying to explain to somebody though words, or on paper written, about how my dyslexia feels to me, I spent the time trying to think how it should translate into looking and feeling and sounding’ p.8
V. ‘I found new meaning in actually what my dyslexia means to me’ p.8
W. ‘I think I managed to find new meaning for myself and my dyslexia’ p.8
X. ‘I actually understand it better now than I did before the performance’ p.8
Y. ‘Because I'm able to put it into something which I understand better than words written a piece of paper, which is an art form’ p.8
Z. ‘I understand it better’ p.8
AA. ‘I completely understand it better’ p.8
BB. ‘I actually made myself understand better as well’ p.8
CC. ‘I understood, it sounds funny but I understood how frustrating it must be for other people around me trying to understand me when I'm in that anxious state’ p.8
DD. ‘By doing that performance and then watching it back as well, I was able to see what my mom sees and how I would struggle to put into words to her how I was feeling’ p.8
EE. ‘I was able to see myself frustrated’ p.8
FF. ‘And that was almost a reflection of perhaps how frustrated my mom or my boyfriend must feel when I'm trying to explain to them or get them to understand it’ p.8
GG. ‘The mutual frustration and disorientation of not really understanding’ p.8
HH. ‘It made me see it’ p.9
II. ‘I made myself understand the process of what I go through better’ p.9
JJ. ‘Because it was almost like I was organizing it for myself’ p.9
KK. ‘By seeing that I was able to identify things that I could probably do in the future so that I don't get to that point again’ p.9
LL. ‘Not that it's always doable but how I could calm the situation so it doesn't get to that point’ p.9
MM. ‘I have not overthrown the shackles of my own oppression yet’ p.10
NN. ‘Reaffirming that no it's not I can't, it's that I can do this’ p.11
OO. ‘It felt like a positive moment’ p.11
PP. ‘That gives it meaning that people can, not recreate something that you've made but they can understand an element of what you made and they can choose to put that into their piece to make something powerful’ p.13
QQ. ‘I want people to try to understand it better if they can’ p.15

IX. Risks and safety

A. ‘it's still something that I struggle with that actually showing it was a big risk’ p.9
B. ‘Because it's not something that's going to go away’ p.9
C. ‘Whereas, my first piece was quite guarded in a way and it was about somebody else's influence upon my life and my way of doing things’ p.9
D. ‘The second piece was that's my brain, that's the influence my brain has on my body and my mind and everything’ p.9

X. *Artistic choices and process*

A. ‘I wanted to create that but with people being able to see it all’ p.8

B. ‘I wanted to let people into a glimmer of what it's like for me’ p.9
C. ‘To let people into the frustration so they could feel it too’ p.9
D. ‘I wanted to make them see the frustration and the difficulty because it's such an invisible thing normally’ p.9
E. ‘I wanted to make it visible’ p.9
F. ‘I think I went with the intention of wanted to let people see what it's like’ p.9
G. ‘I think I came out of it having made people see what it was like’ p.9
H. ‘And actually even more than just see what it was like, I think people felt what it was like’ p.9
I. ‘I was trying to create how I felt’ p.9
J. ‘I didn't really want to go beyond the second one so I thought I'd put in part of the first bit and then the whole of the second one’ p.10
K. ‘Because I kind of didn't want to let go of it’ p.10
L. ‘I did think about re-performing some elements of it and I thought actually no, I don't want to get bogged down in that’ p.10
M. ‘I really didn't know what to do for the third one’ p.10
N. ‘It made me think about going to protests when I was younger’ p.10
O. That made me think about Tracy Chapman's song talking about revolution’ p.10
P. ‘I thought about how we put our own implications on ourselves and how sometimes we can destroy our own positive attributes by telling ourselves that’ p.10
Q. ‘I thought about making a protest against the negative thoughts in my head whether they were put there by other people or myself’ p.10
R. ‘It was a really hard one to kind of come up with what to say’ p.10
S. ‘That idea of revolting against your own negative stuff’ p.10
T. ‘I think it's a process that I've begun maybe with little whisperings not with shouting or an actual protest’ p.10
U. ‘It was autobiographical in the sense of maybe what I would like to happen or what is starting to happen, not what's actually happened’ p.11
V. ‘I think by inviting other people in, it was maybe to reaffirm that actually other people have those moments of negativity too’ p.11
W. ‘Allowing them to have a space to let it out but also to allow myself to see that I'm not the only person that might sometimes struggle’p.11
X. ‘Allowing myself to get to that place of having a complete revolution, not having negative thoughts’ p.11
Y. ‘I think that's why I let the audience in was for themselves but also for me’ p.11
Z. ‘Perhaps it's because I would like other people to be involved in my own positive approach to myself’ p.11
AA. ‘It felt like everybody's process and performances sparked something off in everybody’ p.14
BB. ‘Whether that was just one thing to take it further so that you could show more of yourself or there was an element of the way they performed that you emulated or was it an idea that they gave that then became part of your piece’ p.14
CC. ‘It felt like along the way everybody took another little bit of each other’ p.14
DD. ‘the performance is a therapy in itself’ p.15

EE. ‘It is that ability to cross boundaries and show something that you can't just describe in words’ p.15
FF. ‘That feeling makes it a really positive experience’ p.15

XI. *Meaningful moments*

A. ‘My second performance was the most meaningful thing for me’ p.14
B. ‘Because it brought to life something that I had really struggled to describe previously or show others’ p.14
C. ‘And it helped me make meaning of my own self and understanding it better’ p.14
D. ‘Another meaningful moment was I think the whole group process at times’ p.14
E. ‘There were some very meaningful moments when I really connected and felt the same and understood each other’ p.14
F. ‘That was a very meaningful moment when people were able to understand each other without having to say it or express it’ p.14
G. ‘But the overall feeling was of connection and working well with one another’ p.14
H. ‘I think another meaningful moment was Jenny’s performance and its connection’ p.15
I. ‘But also her subsequent performances knowing that they were in part ... Mine was sparked up by hers and hers was sparked by mine’ p.15
J. ‘It created a connection’ p.15
K. ‘It solidified the connection’ p.15
L. ‘That an idea was sparked from my piece, that was a nice feeling’ p.15
M. ‘Then again, Henry's last performance was a really meaningful moment’ p.15
N. ‘It was very emotional and strong and it just evoked feelings in myself’ p.15
O. ‘It felt like a positive thing from a negative thing and it solidified I think the whole process’ p.15
P. ‘It felt like seeing somebody open up and blossom a little bit by being able to share that with other people’ p.15

XII. *Support and structure*

A. ‘It was a completely different way of working than what I'd experienced before where the pressure was on’ p.5
B. ‘We were doing an exercise and I think one of them was about protesting’ p.10
C. ‘A machine I think it was’ p.10
D. ‘The idea came to me from that machine that we did’ p.10
E. ‘It's been a pleasure to take part but also a really positive experience in general’ p.16

APPENDIX 10: Themes from clusters of relevant meaning from post-project individual interview of Participant 6 (Jenny)

I. *Witnessing*

A. 'I think the second one and third performance, the witness, the audience is very important for me' p.5
B. 'Because I'm talking about I leave the country and … like that and most of the people there are British' p.5
C. 'The audience is British but they all say that we're really touching on something' p.5
D. 'It just let me start to think maybe some of the emotion is not so private' p.5
E. 'It's unique but it's also universal' p.5
F. 'Maybe they didn't have that feelings that go into the different country but they have some …' p.5
G. 'The second one it's more like … it's after I watched, I saw Karen's performance that is … yeah, that is the first thing I think about' p.9
H. 'I was, at that moment I was feeling very privileged I can saw her performance … I can see her performance and …' p.15
I. 'At that moment I feel that performance is for me at that moment' p.15
J. 'I feel it's very interesting that actually it's her story and is triggered by my story and become her story' p.15
K. 'It's kind of we connected to each other and at that moment, I still … when she performed at that moment, I'm thinking about this is my performance' p.15
L. 'It's made me feel that a lot of thing is not just … it's kind of universal things' p.15
M. 'I think because before I think about people to witness in me, maybe they will think oh, I'm weird or why do you have this thinking' p.15
N. 'Then finding people witnessing me and they can resonate it, start to make me feel actually, everyone has same feelings' p.15

II. *Being witnessed*

A. 'Like Sophie told me. She resonated … she had some resonate to my performance' p.5
B. 'It's the … she thinks that even she's British, sometimes she had some difficulty to communicate to someone and the misunderstanding led her to feel chaotic or something' p.5
C. 'I think actually, they're in this process. It's more I notice it about the role of being witnessed more than the role of witness' p.5
D. 'I think because I'm being the witness. I'm being witnessed, yeah. For me, it's more …' p.5
E. 'I'm more sense of that someone's looking to me' p.5
F. 'But actually, I don't like people to look at me' p.5
G. 'But during this process I feel more and more comfortable. I think because they give very positive input and started to …' p.5
H. 'I started to acknowledge maybe let people to see something is not very terrible thing' p.5
I. 'It looks like they help me to see myself' p.6

J. ‘I want to do something but sometimes, I don’t know what that means’ p.6
K. ‘When people see that and they witness this and they gave me some feedback and that helped me to think about oh yeah, that is one of my feeling” p.6
L. ‘Actually, it’s there. It just … I don’t know what’s there. I think it’s very interesting’ p.6
M. ‘Yeah. I think I kind of know a little bit but I just cannot use the words and use the knowledge thinking to talk about what my performance is’ p.6
N. ‘It’s more … helped me to more identify what happened’ p.7
O. 'I think I fear about being watched is because I’m afraid that people will judge me’ p.8
P. ‘Then when people feedback to me, make me think in different ways’ p.8
Q. ‘It helps me to see another side of me or help me to organize what I’m thinking and it becomes more and more interesting’ p.8
R. ‘Being watched is not so terrifying thing anymore. It’s been interesting. Yeah’ p.8

III. *Resonance*

A. ‘Natalia. I didn’t choose her performance to resonate … to feedback’ p.13
B. ‘she maybe is the first performance I have some feelings but I just write down like the thing and I keep saying just the thing’ p.13
C. ‘I think it’s the same if I have some feelings but I just don’t know how to organize these feelings’ p.13
D. ‘I started to realize why I like this story’ p.13
E. ‘For me, it’s telling me a story that if someone is special, yeah’ p.13
F. ‘She doesn’t like this special or she doesn’t know what this special is and not knowing what people are saying’ p.13
G. ‘She has it and it’s very annoyed actually, and I pick up that annoyed but I don’t know where this annoyed come from’ p.13
H. ‘I was … really like her story but I just don’t know what’s that come from’ p.13
I. ‘And then until her third performance that I started to know, “Oh, I think that’s why I like her story”’ p.13
J. ‘Because I think I can feel that’ p.14
K. ‘I have some feelings like the annoyed part and the ending’ p.14
L. ‘It’s very interesting thing is she is the one that I have the first resonate and I write it in my book because I didn’t write … the Karen’s one in my book’ p.14
M. ‘But I chose Catherine one because I think Catherine one is more easy to acknowledge it in my brain’ p.14
N. ‘His performance is it’s something trigger me or resonate with me but I don’t know what’s that but I know there is some connection’ p.14
O. ‘When he invite me to join his performance, I just feel that oh, I can witness this connection now”’ p.14
P. ‘But I still don’t know what the connection is but it’s more … yeah. It’s just not more specific. More … yeah’ p.14
Q. ‘I was really touching and her performance is about finding the words …’ p.15
R. ‘Before doing this project, I never think about being resonated is so important but yeah’ p.15
S. ‘Actually, every special things can resonate someone and just people don’t know how to say that but they’re using different ways to let people know it’ p.15

T. ‘Actually, everyone can pick up anything’ p.15
U. ‘Maybe, I did this performance, I didn’t think about that but when she picked up that elements then it helped me to think about another element too’ p.15

IV. *Interpersonal dimension*

A. ‘Everyone is very accepting in our group’ p.4
B. ‘We accept every performance and we feedback a lot. It tells me there is not really a bad performance’ p.4
C. ‘I think just the fear, the anxiety is gone after the first performance’ p.8
D. ‘It just because no one judged us actually’ p.8
E. ‘We assess every performance and we gave feedback’ p.8
F. ‘It’s not about the feedback about it’s a good performance or bad performance’ p.8
G. ‘It’s a feedback about the resonate. Yeah. It didn’t judge anything’ p.8
H. ‘At first, in our group, I seldom feedback to them, I just watched’ p.12
I. ‘Actually, at first, I’ve used the words and it’s just really hard to communicate and then I started to use a picture or movement to tell them what my feelings is’ p.12
J. ‘In this group, I feel very different at the first time’ p.16
K. ‘The beginning because people speak very fast and although they are all British but the accent is quite different’ p.16
L. ‘At first like I really try follow up what they’re saying and because we need to feedback a lot, it’s just very hard, yeah’ p.16
M. ‘This is … maybe I feel very frustrated, I think. That’s why I came from the first …’ p.16
N. ‘I think if I didn’t join the group I never would … I won’t talk about this any … yeah, yeah. It’s interesting’ p.16
O. ‘After the first performance, they feedback a lot. Yeah, about my first performance’ p.17
P. ‘I felt very supportive at that moment because at first I thought maybe they will be angry or something because it’s very violent’ p.17
Q. ‘Actually, they’re all talking about the communication things and a lot of people say they can resonate with the feelings and the fear’ p.17
R. ‘At that moment, I feel very supportive when people say that’ p.17
S. ‘At that moment, it just … I don’t feel anyway like being a different culture anymore when they said that’ p.17
T. ‘The barrier is just gone’ p.18

V. *Element of surprise*

A. ‘Actually, I’m quite shocked that some people say they have the same feelings although they are not talking about being in another country’ p.16
B. ‘They talk about being that human beings communicate sometimes. They just … we all have mixed communication’ p.16

VI. *Personal change and meaning*

A. ‘I think I more understand why I like to do autobiography’ p.2
B. ‘that is a new insight for me so that’s the biggest change I think, yeah’ p.2
C. ‘For me it’s more natural for me to using the words. It’s easier and …’ p.2

D. ‘Sometimes I cannot find the right words to say something or sometimes I just feel that it’s weird to speak up some idea with using my words’ p.2
E. ‘Using the drama or the story, I feel more comfortable and it’s just really natural to me more than using words’ p.3
F. ‘I never noticed that before’ p.3
G. ‘For me now being a good actress is not more … is not important anymore just because that’s drama, it’s the way I talk, the way I express’ p.3
H. ‘I don’t want to be a good actress. I just want to use these things to help me to communicate, it’s more like that. That is …’ p.3
I. ‘I think that is a big change’ p.3
J. ‘When I go back I want to transform it again and I want to have a performance in Taiwan. It kind of just reflects what I did in here’ p.3
K. ‘Yeah, so I think that is the biggest change. It kind of …’ p.3
L. ‘I think it’s not fear anymore’ p.3
M. ‘Yeah, I think before I think that I need to be a good actress and I wanted people to see’ p.4
N. ‘Now it’s more like, I don’t care it’s not good enough or not. I just want you guys to see that’s me’ p.4
O. ‘That’s changed. I don’t know how, it just changed. I don’t know why’ p.4
P. ‘I think it’s main insight for me’ p.4
Q. ‘I think now is more communicate not just relief’ p.7
R. ‘But now it’s more … I want to know, I want to let you know that is my thinking and what do you feel’ p.7
S. ‘It’s more like interaction’ p.7
T. ‘Now it’s more I want to know what you’re thinking and yeah, it’s more interaction’ p.7
U. ‘At first I’m thinking autobiography just finding myself and really get some relief’ p.8
V. ‘It kind of I don’t want you to feedback me because actually I don’t want to hear but now it’s more …’ p.8
W. ‘Because I accept people to watch me in different way and I more accept that actually’ p.8
X. ‘If I want to find myself in different way, different opinion, I have to let people to watch me. It’s all related’ p.8
Y. ‘I started to think maybe it’s not so terrifying things. I start to accept people to give me some feedback’ p.8
Z. ‘I think I have more confidence to deal with this feedback’ p.9
AA. ‘when the time I joined this project is almost one year later when I came here and I never think that it’s the things I want to explore’ p.16
BB. ‘But when I start to join the group and it started to came up the thinking that I want people know that it sometimes is hard to follow what people are saying. Yeah’ p.16
CC. ‘I feel supportive so I don’t think about, “They don’t understand me anymore”’ p.17
DD. ‘The barrier of the culture or the language is gone’ p.17

VII. *Risks and safety*

A. ‘I remember the first performance, I was really nervous so I say I don’t want to be the first one because I was really nervous’ p.4
B. ‘I think I feel nervous is because I didn’t know can I do that or maybe I will perform very badly or something’
C. ‘But when I started to notice there’s not a good or bad performance, it just become more … it’s easier and … yeah’ p.4

VIII. *Artistic choices and process*

A. ‘The first performance my thinking is very simple is that because I want to revenge’ p.6
B. ‘Yeah, just like that. I just want you guys to know what happened to me and I didn’t think too much’ p.7
C. ‘The first performance came very fast like one day I just start to think oh yeah, I’m going to do that’ p.9
D. ‘There is no many thoughts, it just become …’ p.9
E. ‘I just used two minutes to finish all the script and finished everything’ p.9
F. ‘I said yeah, I’m going to do that’ p.9
G. ‘The first performance is more like instinct or the … how to say that?’ p.9
H. ‘I’m really eager, want to do that’ p.9
I. ‘Then after that I just don’t have that feelings anymore’ p.9
J. ‘I don’t know how to create the second one’ p.9
K. ‘Then we did something in the group but I don’t … I didn’t remember’ p.9
L. ‘I don’t remember now. Maybe sound or something’ p.9
M. ‘I forgot. Dream, sound, tempo’ p.10
N. ‘We had one workshop. It’s thinking about our sound or something’ p.10
O. ‘Or some physical thing. I just cannot remember it’ p.10
P. ‘It’s because of the group things but I forgot what is ...’ p.10
Q. ‘The second one is more difficult for me’ p.10
R. ‘I think it’s because I watched Karen’s performance. I feel something but I still don’t know how to use this something to become the metaphor’ p.10
S. ‘It has a gap’ p.10
T. ‘I did something with the small group is we use the physical things and then start to relate it to oh, it’s with the tape’ p.10
U. ‘When I use in a different way, using the sounds it help me too’ p.10
V. ‘I started not just think by words or using the logical thinking’ p.10
W. ‘It just helped me to not keep thinking in my brain, just using my body …’ p.11
X. ‘There is a process. I start from I don’t understand. I try so hard to understand’ p.11
Y. ‘Maybe now I understand a little bit and then in the end, I say yeah, I understand but it’s time to go home’ p.11

IX. Meaningful moment

A. ‘When Sophie told me that she feels the same when she had some miscommunication with people’ p.7
B. ‘And then I started to think yeah, I think there is a lot of miscommunication with me and the other person’ p.7

C. ‘It’s not just in here. It’s in my whole life. I always will remember that miscommunication’ p.7
D. ‘Then the unknowing things like there is an audience say when they cover their eyes if you’re very scared because there is unknowing’ p.7
E. ‘I just know that I feel …’ p.7
F. ‘I don’t know where I’m going and I couldn’t notice that it’s the fear or it’s unknowing feelings’ p.7
G. ‘I cannot see but I didn’t relate it to oh, because I’m fear because I couldn’t see what is the future’ p.7
H. ‘They helped me to think about, yeah, to think about more concrete feelings for the words’ p.7
I. ‘They help me to find it like that’ p.7
J. ‘Yeah. I think it’s useful’ p.7
K. ‘Yeah, the thing. Yeah. Yeah. It’s all …’ p.16
L. ‘Yeah, yeah. It’s kind of … yeah. Yeah. Yeah’ p.16

APPENDIX 11: Themes from clusters of relevant meaning from post-project individual interview of Participant 7 (Henry)

I. *Witnessing*

A. ‘Then, the second time, obviously, I was influenced by other people because that was the whole point p.8
B. ‘In the second performance I was influenced mainly by Louise's because that was ...’ p.8
C. ‘I chose Louise's for different reasons’ p.8
D. ‘Yeah, she is my friend and I hang out with her all the fucking time, but when I saw her performance that was a completely side to her I had never seen before’ p.8
E. ‘Then, also I felt like it was a bit similar to my first performance’ p.9
F. ‘I felt like hers was quite a lot about how she used to have old habits which she doesn't really have that much anymore’ p.9
G. ‘Because she changed her mind so much, when I actually saw it I had no idea what to expect’ p.9
H. ‘I hadn't expected anything that she was doing. It surprised me’ p.9
I. ‘I could feel how hard it was for her to do that’ p.9
J. ‘I think the most influence that anyone had on me would have been Louise for my second performance’ p.16
K. ‘Probably Natalia because I really enjoyed all of her performances and I felt like they had a really strong identity’ p.16
L. ‘Each of them had a really strong individual identity’ p.16

II. *Being witnessed*

A. ‘I think that I felt that there was more expectation on me in the last performance from my friends who had been there for the second one’ p.17
B. ‘I think it was just two people and I was like, "Oh, are you going to come to the last one?"’ p.17
C. ‘I just felt like in my head I was just like, "Oh, okay."’ P.17
D. ‘I wanted to give them something different which they hadn't seen before, my first two performances, because I didn't want to be really repetitive’ p.17
E. ‘I think that influenced me slightly’ p.17
F. ‘I think the other thing which influenced me was having Eirini there was really, really weird’ p.17
G. ‘I think the other thing was the Q & A session at the end of the second one was super interesting’ p.18
H. ‘The only other thing was, as you know, I was annoyed that people handed in blank sheets of paper in the last one’ p.18
I. ‘That did really frustrate me because I just thought I wouldn't do that. That's why I just kept thinking ...’ p.18
J. ‘I think audience, in general, it felt like a step up the second time we did it’ p.19

III. *Resonance*

A. ‘I thought that I knew how hard it probably was for her to show that to people’ p.9

B. ‘I think that's probably why that performance I connected with it on that level more than ...’ p.9
C. ‘That's my connection with it. I connected with it. Yeah’ p.10
D. ‘I think I recognized a bit of myself in her’ p.10
E. ‘It was like trying to break out of a cycle’ p.10
F. ‘This is just the connection I made in my head’ p.10
G. ‘Actually, because I think everyone's performances impacted mine’ p.15
H. ‘When I say in my second performance I was influenced by Louise's, I was influenced by Louise's probably in the most obvious way, but I think there was little bits of everyone's’ p.15
I. ‘Especially in my last one. I felt like I had been influenced by lots of different areas’ p.15
J. ‘Even just the idea of the pieces of paper was influenced by Karen's second performance, which I loved’ p.15
K. ‘in some ways maybe Natalia inspired me slightly for my second performance because her characters wore the masks and didn't say anything’ p.16

IV. *Dissonance*

A. ‘I just felt like what they were doing was not personal on any level at all’ p.11
B. ‘I thought, "Why the fuck are you here?"’ p.11
C. ‘That was my honest opinion’ p.11
D. ‘I didn't say anything at all about that until quite near the end’ p.11
E. ‘It just still didn't tell me absolutely anything about them’ p.11
F. ‘Then, that's why it pushed me to think, "What have they learned about me? I should practice what I preach and I should do it."
G. ‘It pushed me to say things like, "Do you know what? They're not doing anything personal. I want to do something really personal”’ p.11
H. ‘I just thought I want to show them what can be achieved through this’ p.12
I. ‘I think that gave me the momentum to tell the person in the group that I don't think what they're doing is right’ p.18
J. ‘But in the last one I could see exactly what they were trying to do and I know that that was a direct response to what I had said to them’ p.18

V. *Interpersonal dimension*

A. ‘I didn't realize how much the group would impact the experience’ p.3
B. ‘I wouldn't have come up with the idea of the second one and I wouldn't have done the last performance unless I felt comfortable with everyone in the group’ p.3
C. ‘I thought we all had a really good group mentality’ p.3
D. ‘I just thought everyone was really supportive and it was really nice’ p.4
E. ‘Well, most people were really supportive, so it was really nice’ p.3
F. ‘I didn't expect that to be so important’ p.3
G. ‘I think the group impacted the performances more and more as time went on’ p.8
H. ‘The first performance was impacted by my small group just in the way I performed it’ p.8
I. ‘It was Sophie who suggested, "Hey, why don't you stand in front of the screen? That would look really cool”’ p.8

J. ‘I was just like, "Yeah, that's a really cool idea"’ p.8
K. ‘What frustrated me most, I will tell you this, is that some people in ...’ p.8
L. ‘Well, one person in the group just didn't do the ... Oh my God. I don't even know what the word is’ p.8
M. ‘It just really frustrated me’ p.8
N. ‘I just thought the whole point here is to be inspired by someone else so that really frustrated me’ p.8
O. ‘And I've been friends with her for almost two years now’ p.8
P. ‘She's my friend and I just think it's nice’ p.10
Q. ‘I don't know if me being there made her that open or if I wasn't there she would have been more open’ p.10
R. ‘I think that would be really interesting to know’ p.10
S. ‘Again, my small group influenced that whole performance a lot’ p.10
T. ‘I definitely think my small group, and the group in general, but specifically in my small group, I literally ...’ p.14
U. ‘They were amazing. They were so supportive. They were always giving me ideas and that's what I loved so much’ p.14
V. ‘They were just really, really nice’ p.15
W. ‘It was bizarre to be thrown into a situation where you're getting a really strong insight into another person's life before even really ... In Jenny’s case, remembering their name’ p.15
X. ‘That's intense’ p.15
Y. ‘If I didn't like them, it would have been really different. My performances would have been really different’ p.15
Z. ‘Having an insight into their life made me want to give them a bit more of an insight into my life’ p.15
AA. ‘Apart from that one person who I honestly think is an anomaly in your research’ p.20
BB. ‘Apart from that person who I feel was just completely separate from the group’ p.20

VI. Element of surprise

A. ‘I think taking part has definitely opened up my ideas about performance’ p.2
B. ‘I'd never really done autobiographical performance before so I think that was really, really interesting’ p.2
C. ‘I think, as a result of the last performance I realized how hard it was for me to talk about my illness’ p.4
D. ‘I thought it was going to be easy’ p.4
E. ‘Then, actually it was really, really, really bizarre and I just didn't expect that at all’ p.4
F. ‘I think that hit me a lot harder than I thought it would’ p.4
G. ‘It was just seeing it all laid out and I just thought, actually this is actually pretty shit’ p.4
H. ‘I just think I looked at it and I just thought, actually no, this is quite rubbish’ p.4
I. ‘It has been quite rubbish at times and it just made me realize that’ p.4

VII. Personal change and meaning

A. ‘It did help me relate to others’ p.3
B. ‘Because I know how much I wanted to share and that that changed by the end of it’ p.4
C. ‘It also made me take it more seriously’ p.5
D. ‘I've been like, "Okay, I need to just cut it out completely."’ p.5
E. ‘Then, since doing the performance I literally have just cut it out, which is really good’ p.5
F. ‘That makes it sound like it's just changed my ... It hasn't’ p.5
G. ‘I think that it has had an impact on me that way’ p.5
H. ‘It's made me realize that it is more serious than I was giving it credit for’ p.5
I. ‘The last one was definitely more personal. Yeah’ p.11
J. ‘It was just the case of being like, "Well, do you know what? If I don't do it now I'm not going to do it"’ p.11
K. ‘Like I said, I didn't actually think it was going to be as hard to perform as it was’ p.11
L. ‘I was actually physically shaking when I was doing it and I felt like such a twat’ p.11

VIII. Risks and safety

A. ‘In my first performance, actually I felt like I didn't want to share that much’ p.5
B. ‘I don't think I was consciously trying not to share that much’ p.6
C. ‘But at the same time I was like, "I don't want to start jumping into anything too specific because I feel like that's really heavy and that's not necessarily why I'm here"’ p.6

IX. Artistic choices and process

A. ‘I wanted to create something which was I thought was going to be different to everyone else's’ p.6
B. ‘That was really important to me at first. I don't know why but it was’ p.6
C. ‘I think it would be interesting if I try and involve video in it and if I sing because no one else is singing’ p.6
D. ‘I was like, "You don't have to act out what's happened at all. You can do it differently”’ p.6
E. ‘After the second performance, when I consciously decided not to say anything in the performance’ p.6
F. ‘That was when I thought in the third one I'm not going to say anything either’ p.6
G. ‘I think that's the main link between the three is that they're ...’ p.6
H. ‘Well, they're not silent because I sing in two of them, but they are essentially silent’ p.6
I. ‘Well, also I didn't have anything to say. I literally didn't have anything to say’ p.6
J. ‘I just thought, I'm showing you what I'm trying to say. I don't need to say it’ p.6
K. ‘I think the last one wasn't as clear as maybe I thought it was’ p.6
L. ‘Those two things combined made me want to make my last performance actually come’ p.8
M. ‘I think I wanted it to be a different performance. I didn't want it to be copying’ p.10

N. ‘In my performance I wanted to break down what she had done and make it really, really simple’ p.10
O. ‘I wanted to show her and I wanted to show myself how simple it can be’ p.10
P. ‘I think that was the most simple performance. I think that's a good thing’ p.10
Q. ‘Do you know what? You're not always going to be able to follow people exactly. You have to go at your own ...’ p. 12
R. ‘I'm trying to turn into a fable now, but that's essentially what I felt like the most metaphorical one was the second one by far’ p.12
S. ‘I felt it was really, really simple as well. I thought it was the simplest one. I liked that a lot’ p.13
T. ‘I thought the second one was a really nice break and it was a nice little bridge’ p.13
U. ‘I felt like it was a little bridge between two really personal performances. The first one maybe not as personal, but it was still really ...’ p.13
V. ‘I thought if that second piece wasn't in place then the other two pieces wouldn't have existed as they did’ p.13
W. ‘That's why I really like that they existed as a trio’ p.13
X. ‘I do think that that strain of thought is over’ p.18

X. Support and structure

A. ‘it was like you weren't actually looking for anything specific and we didn't have to do it in a certain way’ p.3
B. ‘I really enjoyed that. It was really open’ p.3
C. ‘I'm a fan of structure and there needs to be some kind of structure within it because it was such an open process’ p.7
D. ‘There need to be some kind of structure’ p.8
E. ‘I've really, really enjoyed it and I'm so glad I did it’ p.11
F. ‘I think the group discussions at the beginning and at the end were really cool with the whole group’ p.20
G. ‘I really liked those a lot, especially at the end because I felt it was like meeting up’ p.20
H. ‘And it was like getting a little insight into where they are at and what they're doing’ p.20
I. ‘That was nice. That was really nice’ p.20

APPENDIX 12: Summary of the post-project individual interview of Participant 1 (Natalia)

Natalia described her experience of the research project as a "milestone" in her development as a person and artist. The project responded to an internal desire to give life to an idea that she was carrying within herself, like a baby in gestation in the womb. She felt "liberated" as she realised her desire and "gave birth to it". She delivered what was within her and the "knot" she felt inside became undone. Natalia felt that the group gave her enough containment and support to go into labour and to insufflate life into what she so desperately wanted. Even though the child was hers and there couldn't be any doubt about that, the members of her small group became the "midwives and nurses" that she needed to ensure a safe delivery of the child. This was her first performance and the process could have ended there as her main idea was "actualised".

Birth is a moment when what was invisible in the womb becomes visible to the world. For Natalia, there was an element of surprise in realising that the birth of that child was not what she initially expected. It was "very basic" and did not have that enigmatic profile that she anticipated. Equally and maybe more importantly, it didn't have her in its control. To the contrary, through the process of birth she gained mastery over it.

The form that Natalia chose for her first performance provided enough distance for her to engage with the subject. She chose a "traditional" way of making a performance based on storytelling that she did not particularly enjoyed because it felt very familiar, but that she was "comfortable" with. That form of performance appeared to her as the safest possible way to explore and create what was within her. It enabled her to "explore things without talking about them directly". She "craved massive distance" and the process of performing contrasted with her experience of therapy whereby she felt the pressure of putting things into words. Natalia found great relief in finding such a way of expressing herself. She was able to go beyond words and, as a result, to protect herself against what would feel too exposing and overwhelming. She found a way of saying what words failed to express. She said what she wanted to say but also remained concealed behind metaphors.

At the same time and through the witnessing of other performances, Natalia became presented with different modes of representation that translated different experiences and perceptions. She was confronted by a number of performances whereby performers chose a much more direct way of conveying the nature of an autobiographical moment. She was like plunged into their personal world and made to directly experience that particular world. She found these performances raw, honest and open, and was taken aback by what they so powerfully conveyed. It was not so much about what these performances were about than how they were performed. They contrasted sharply with her own aesthetic choices and provided her with an opportunity to connect with and access a different part of her own creativity.

Natalia devised her second performance based on a "true connection" with the performances of Jenny, Nathan and Louise. She found Louise's performance particularly difficult to cope with because of "that level of honesty". Natalia devised a second performance with the view of enabling the audience to experience things much more

directly. She became fascinated with “wanting to do a non-traditional performance”. Natalia gave herself permission to experience something in her second performance that she hadn’t come into contact before, but that was a direct result of her own experiencing of others’ performances. She went “sideways”, “looked around”, “tried new things”, “had great fun with it”, and “loved it”. Her second performance significantly belonged to a different order of experience based on affective, sensory and embodied engagement.

Natalia found the support of the group and the structure of the sessions particularly important in her own process throughout the project. These gave her “real foundations to then build on comfortably and try different things” without feeling judged or persecuted. She was particularly interested in the “kind of magic” that I, as facilitator, supposedly created to make the group work safely. The general context of the workshop created the appropriate conditions to enable her to take risks and to do things that she wouldn’t normally do.

Natalia’s second performance made her experience the newness and joy of “doing something different”. It also enabled her, in her third performance, to retell the story of her first performance in quite a significantly different way. Her third performance was a way for her to “connect everything together and fill the gaps”. She reflected that, in contrast to the first performance, she did not make others act her story. She was simply herself telling a story that was also her story. She was able in her third performance to own the child that had been born, and to acknowledge: “this is my child”. The way she became closer to others as audience was a reflection of how she became closer to the child and to herself, whilst keeping the distance through the metaphor of the story.

All three performances were very meaningful to Natalia. She knew as a performer what they meant but being too explicit about it would “take the magic away from the story”. Verbalising the experience would probably betray it. Worlds would only fall short of meaning. It felt that what mattered more for her was the experiencing and the “feeling”. Only for the third performance was Natalia able to reflect on how the meaning was about the way she “owned up” her story. Natalia was unsure as to what contributed for those meanings to emerge. She concluded that none of “those meanings could have been created without the interaction with the group”. She described these interactions as “the route to the meaning”.

It is worth mentioning that Natalia considered developing further the creative exploration of the autobiographical material started in the research. She imagined revisiting elements of her first and second performance that she described as a “new found form”.

APPENDIX 13: Summary of the post-project individual interview of Participant 2 (Louise)

Louise described how much more open she felt as a result of having taken part in the project. She wasn't sure in the interview what new awareness about herself she might have developed due to her involvement, but she identified "openness" as a very significant step forward. She spent a lot of time talking about this especially when considering the progression and changes between her different performances.

Louise reflected on how at the beginning of the project she was a lot shier to put herself forward. She gained in confidence and became gradually more comfortable in sharing her opinions in front of others in the group. She noticed how she became also "willing to do that outside of the group". She particularly thought about how she felt much more capable of putting her ideas across when engaged in group work on her undergraduate course. Louise explained how her last performance reflected very clearly that process, and how surprised she was that she had managed to create and perform it in front of others.

Louise attributed that change to two main factors. The first factor was the way in which she identified with a large number of performances. She explained how "seeing" people "sharing quite personal stuff" helped her to become more open and "less secretive". She could find a point of connection with most performances, particularly Natalia's first performance. Interestingly, although that performance deeply resonated with her, she "couldn't think of a way to incorporate" it into her own. For Louise, Natalia's performance retained an element of opacity and secrecy whilst at the same time being very personal. Louise needed further witnessing to cultivate the seed that had been planted. Louise reflected on how she was influenced by some of Jenny's and Natalia's artistic choices in their second performances. On the whole, she recognised how different performances influenced the "format" of her final one.

The second factor had to do with group work and how the group became "a bit of a community". She described a sense of togetherness that helped her connect with aspects of herself that she normally protects herself against. She particularly recognised the positive influence of her small group and how she felt supported to explore her ideas. This slowly helped her to come out of herself and to take greater risks that were made explicit in her third performance.

Louise described her first two performances as "introductory". They remained very "contained" and, as she explained, "they were private but what it was about was kind of hidden". One would nearly need to be inducted to understand the layers of personal meaning within these two performances. Louise recognised that they possibly were more obvious than what she had initially envisaged. But it remains that they reflected a tendency to keep herself private and to control the level of exposure.

The openness that Louise described was epitomised in her last performance that was a culmination point in her process, and a sharp contrast with her previous performances. As she said, "the third one was like taking that top layer off and just going straight into this is actually what it is". The third performance was a way for her to "round off" what she

previously created. It is in a particular group session that this was revealed to her as a result of engaging in an exercise that aimed at mapping the participants' individual processes after the first two performances.

In her third performance, Louise felt "to let it all out there", and she literally did. She allowed the audience to mingle within the performance space and to look into some personal memories and archives that she had displayed on the floor. She described the experience as "surreal" as she went from a hiding place to a very open stance. This could be viewed as a reckless jump. But Louise described how she took great care to select the material for her performance in a way that demonstrated some control over it, and an awareness to keep herself safe regarding what she decided to show to the public. In the interview, Louise rectified some of the assumptions that I myself made about the inspiration gained from the performances of other participants. I fantasised about the way she broke out of a black tape that was keeping her constrained, and the symbolic nature of this act of liberation. Louise corrected this by saying that it simply was a "happy accident" that resulted from having incorrectly timed her performance. She was happy, she explained, that "it had gone wrong".

Louise reflected on the impact of her relationship with Henry as a friend and fellow student on her undergraduate course. She also referred to two other research participants who dropped out in the very early stages of the research, Tania and Jane. She knew them from previous encounters although only became aware of their involvement in the first week of the group meeting. Louise felt that the special relationship with Henry could have had a greater impact than it actually had. Louise expressed relief when she realised that Henry, as well as Tania and Jane, would not be part of her small group. She explained how being in the same group as Henry could have inhibited her even more as, she felt, he would have been able to voice things for her. She described how she would have become "less open" and how they could have ended up "hiding behind each other'. This would have accentuated some of the pairing that was already at play as, Louise explained, they regularly talked to each other outside of the group about what they enjoyed and connected with.

Louise found it "comfortable" to perform for an audience. She explained that most of the audience was composed of friends who already knew her personally. There was an element of familiarity that also applied to the performance space. She described how she might have felt differently if there had been people who didn't know her that well and whom she might have come into contact again in the university context.

APPENDIX 14: Summary of the post-project individual interview of Participant 3 (Sophie)

Sophie described how she experienced a sense of personal achievement following her involvement in the research and the way she devised and performed three different autobiographical pieces. Sophie's participation in the project felt to her like a journey, a theme that very early in the workshop she identified with and that also represented the progression between her three performances.

Sophie was initially concerned that her performances could have "gravitated" around a significant event that she had already explored in previous autobiographical performances, and that she found difficult to detach herself from. She soon discovered than there was more to her and to her history than that single event, as tragic as it was. She realised that there were no stories better than others. She reflected that all stories were valid, "significant", and had "performance value".

Sophie described how the idea of her first performance was "sparked" as a result of a structured activity in one of the first group sessions. She recounted an event that took place when she went travelling the world. She explained how this memory evolved into a "different performance idea" as a result of discussions and feedback from people in her small group. Yet, she kept to the "adventure theme" of her initial story. Additionally, Sophie also explained how some of the artistic choices within her first performance had been made following another structured activity in the workshop. She adopted a style of performance based on narration. She chose not to directly narrate the story to the audience but to pre-record her own voice.

Sophie pointed out that her first performance illustrated how she always "try and play it safe" when it comes to autobiographical work. Witnessing others and being witnessed by others had a profound impact on her. It opened a path that she willingly explored in her two following performances. Sophie explained how the witnessing of other performances gave her the "permission" and the "inspiration" to do what she wouldn't normally do. She described in great details how the process of witnessing enabled her to achieve what she did. Seeing others enabled her "to release the safety catch", and to enter territories that were not necessarily uncharted but certainly uncultivated. Sophie described how she became aware of the "restrictions" that she put upon herself and the way she tends to keep herself within constraining limits. It wasn't just seeing others that gave her the impulse to "break" through, but also and maybe more importantly hearing others' voices. In contrast to the way she pre-recorded her own voice, other performers such as Jenny and Henry made an active and "effective" use of their voice. They both demonstrated performative vocal abilities that gave Sophie "permission to do it" and to reclaim the power of her subdued voice. Sophie reflected that bearing witness to other performances produced the "inspiration to share a little bit more" and to present veiled aspects of herself.

The process remained somehow gradual. Sophie needed some time to "build up" her own confidence. She described her three performances as "like the beginning, middle, and end". They were clearly connected and gradually provided the impetus for the climax in the third performance where she made the most distinctive use of her voice through singing. She

described the process as “completely unconscious progress” that helped her “develop a better understanding” of herself. Sophie felt a sense of personal triumph by having overcome some of her fears, used her real voice, and honoured a hidden but deeply satisfying part of herself.

Sophie’s performance was also a way to open herself to others and to let them being the witness of her own process. This was not without risks. She was very much aware from the onset of how very easy it is “for a voice to be misinterpreted”. Although the overall quality of the feedback from the audience was a positive reinforcement of her initial intentions, Sophie was also faced with a differently sounding voice of an audience member who questioned the appropriateness of her singing. She was initially upset but described how she was able not to let that voice tone down her experience.

Sophie reflected on how the effects of being witnessed by others became tangible through “feedback”. She described how feedback within her small group helped her to become more “playful” with her autobiographical ideas. It also helped her to become more comfortable with aspects of herself that she usually shies away from, such as her sense of vulnerability. Feedback from the audience completed her experience in two complementary ways. On the one hand, it gave her a feeling of being understood and a sense of internal validation. On the other hand, it provided clarity on what she tried to communicate. Sophie observed how the audience’s perceptions coincided with what she was trying to communicate without necessarily realising that was what she was attempting. The audience recognised something that she hadn’t recognised herself. The circle reached completion as she was able to recognise in the audience’s comments something that they recognised in her.

Sophie described how the process of witnessing and being witnessed became very closely and dialogically intertwined. Her experience of herself and her experience of others (as witnessing or witnessed) became interconnected. She felt able to go deeper into herself as a result of the response she got from others, but equally felt that others were able to go deeper into themselves as a result of her own response to them. Sophie described how it felt like a “break even relationship”, and a “dialogue” between different personal experiences that deepened through “sharing”. She felt that this was made possible because of “trust”.

Sophie reflected on the way meaning is created in autobiographical performance. She observed how, for her, meaning is to be understood as a result of feedback and discussion with others. She described how “meaning changes with every performance” and “with every witness that sees it”. For Sophie, meaning is transient and constantly “evolving” depending on the context in which the performance takes place. Every new “encounter” will reveal new insights, and will create possibilities for new truths to emerge. Sophie particularly insisted on how “receiving the feedback from others” gave meaning to her performance in a way that she hadn’t recognised at the time. She also noted how new meanings kept emerging as we were talking about her experience of the workshop in the interview. She observed how we both were creating and revealing new meanings in our dialogue.

APPENDIX 15: Summary of the post-project individual interview of Participant 4 (Nathan)

Nathan described how he particularly enjoyed the research workshop because it provided a "creative space to work with other people". Nathan explained how the group gave him an opportunity to "be creative with" other people. He placed a lot of hopes in the project as it responded to an intense yearning to create with others and to work collaboratively with others. As it concretised and as Nathan enjoyed the "company", he was left feeling adrift when the "group work" came to an end. He desperately envisaged ways in which it could "carry on" as if it held too many promises to be left at that.

It was difficult for Nathan to come to terms with the fact that the group was "over". He repeatedly expressed how he wished it could continue, to the point of sounding, as he noticed, like a "broken record". He described how what he was really looking for was an "ongoing collaborative performance workshop". The creative and interpersonal aspect of the research project met that need. Nathan described how completing the project felt like a personal achievement. This was despite sometimes "struggling to hang in there" due to tiredness and long term health issues. Yet, his achievement remained overshadowed by the fact that the project would not carry on. It was dampened due to knowing that he had to let go of it.

It was quite difficult for Nathan to reflect on his involvement in the project outside of that knowledge. He did not think that the project led to any new discoveries about himself or "revelations from inside", as he described it. His participation in the workshop resulted in a different form of experiencing that "comes before language". Nathan found it difficult to "articulate" into words an experience where words were absent from, and where the medium of expression was non-verbal. This was most apparent in his third performance that greatly differed from the first two. If his first two performances heavily relied on words, Nathan "discovered movement" in his last performance. The entire piece was non-verbal and based on spontaneous physical movement. It concluded with an invitation to the audience to join him in his improvised dance on stage.

Nathan described how he enjoyed the dancing and found it "new" and "liberating". He reflected on how words can be "off putting sometimes" and how movement as a "poetic form" is a "more gentle way" of engaging with an audience. He became "attracted to the idea" of using fewer words and of privileging physicality and movement as effective forms of communication. If his second performance contained a "call for action" with regards to the issue of climate change, his final performance culminated in a communal act whereby others were invited to share with him a moment of common humanity in movement. He compared the experience of "being physically in space with other people" to a "celebration of togetherness".

Nathan's discovery of movement was no more for him than "practical stuff" with no particular meaning. I couldn't help noticing in the interview the sharp contrast between the first two performances and the last one. I observed how the last performance enabled a different kind of connection with the audience at an entirely physical level, and how the three performances felt like three different attempts to talk about the same thing but in

different ways. I was very curious how Nathan felt about that and what it meant to him personally. My interest was met with a mixture of surprise and bewilderment. On the one hand, this was not something that he had particularly much thought about before, although he reflected on how he would “be thinking about this for a while”. On the other hand, he described my attempts at trying to understand his experience as “quite abstract”, and found it difficult to elaborate and verbalise any further.

With regards to his different performances, Nathan described how he didn’t “actually know where the ideas came from”. Yet, he recognised some influences that certainly had an impact on the way he thought about and devised his performances. He described how the connections he made had less to do with “the specifics or any particular detail” of the life of other performers, but more to do with the “energy” of some performances. He experienced these different performances from within his own body without necessarily resorting to cognitive processing. He described how the connections that he made resulted from the way he physically received and perceived different performances. Nathan particularly found that energy in Sophie’s first performance that was “brimming over with enthusiasm”. Nathan became “preoccupied” with bringing some of that energy into his second performance. He described how it “didn't work” at once, as it “felt a bit forced”. Nathan found in Natalia’s second performance an additional source of inspiration as she was directly “inviting people through an experience”. Additionally, Nathan shortly described how he was also influenced by some of Henry’s comments as well as feedback from the audience following his second performance.

Nathan described how he was considering setting up a theatre workshop based on an ethos of collaborative creative work similar to the one of the research group. This responded to a personal ambition but also translated an attempt to hold on to one of the things that he had found most valuable in the research.

APPENDIX 16: Summary of the post-project individual interview of Participant 5 (Karen)

Karen described her experience of participating in the research as a "really positive experience". Karen explained how certain things had changed for her as a result of taking part in the research workshop. She particularly noticed how "comfortable" she felt in the group, in a way that she had not anticipated. The fact that she felt that "there was no judgement" helped her to become more open, and to "let people in" in a way that would be illustrated in her performances. Karen also noticed how she generally let herself "feel more positive", and did not any longer "expect the negative" for herself.

Ironically, this overall feeling of positivity resulted in Karen feeling more upset and vulnerable when subject to a critical written comment from an audience member after her third performance. She explained that whereas this might have been something that she would have expected in the past, the "impact" this time felt greater to the point of "crushing" her. Although Karen explained that she did not feel as "bothered" now that she had given herself more time to think about it, this was a moment that partially shadowed her overall experience. Karen found that moment particularly "tough" and experienced it as a setback. She felt that someone had been "questioning" her creativity in a way that "brought back in" some of the anxiety of making herself visible.

Karen entered the research with a general interest in the process of witnessing. Karen recognised that witnessing other performances throughout the workshop enabled her to go "further" and "deeper" with her own performances. She explained that watching the way in which others had revealed aspects of themselves, "spurred" her to do the same and to "honour" their commitment. Witnessing others performing their first autobiographical piece opened a significant door for Karen, as she was subsequently able to explore her dyslexia in an original and creative way. This led to her finding "new meaning" and new understanding in what her dyslexia feels like to her and to others.

Karen explained that Jenny's first performance inspired her to explore and communicate the sensations and the physiological experience of her dyslexia in a way that words could not convey. She described how the use of sounds and a general "disorientating feeling" in Jenny's first performance, helped her find a language to "translate" the nature of her experience with dyslexia. She explained how her intention became not solely to enable people to see what dyslexia was like, but more importantly what it felt like. Karen's second performance was like a mirror that reflected the "frustration" and confusion of living with dyslexia, but that also enabled her to see how others were similarly experiencing her condition.

Karen acknowledged that it was a "big risk" for her to explore her dyslexia as this is something that she is still "struggling with". She explained how her second performance was considerably different from the first one that she described as "guarded". She recognised that without experiencing and witnessing Jenny's performance, she wouldn't have taken such a risk. Although less significant, Karen explained how Sophie's first performance also had an influence on her as "it was very positive and felt very uplifting". Karen described how she felt a profound resonance with Henry's last performance as it showed the revealing of

“the invisibility of something”, similar to the revelation and representation of her own dyslexia.

Karen reflected on how her performances were influenced by what she had witnessed, but also became an influence for other performances such as in Henry’s and Jenny’s cases. She explained that it felt “like an honour to have that happened”. She identified a ‘connectedness’ between all performance that showed how “everybody took a bit of each other”, as she put it. For Karen, that connectedness was reflected in what people performed or how they performed.

Karen did not really want to “go beyond” her second performance. She had achieved something that felt important, and she found it difficult to contemplate anything that could follow that. She found inspiration in a group exercise during one of the group sessions, and decided to confront the ‘negative thoughts’ in her head in the shape of a protest on stage. Karen explained that her third performance was an attempt to show what she ‘would like to happen or what is starting to happen but not what's actually happened’. What she performed became a way to sketch a future and to envisage possibilities that were not there when she started the project.

Karen described how, in her third performance, she “let the audience in” as a way to enable people to address their own negative thoughts, but also as a way for her to acknowledge that she was not “the only person that might sometimes struggle”. This was a moment when Karen overcame her own isolation and the solitary place of negative thinking. She seemed to have make a significant transition from a place of disconnection with herself to a place of connection with herself and others.

Karen described how she sometimes felt “uncomfortable” within her small group because of “some people’s different ways of working”. In contrast, she felt more comfortable “in the bigger group as a whole” where “everybody was a lot more active and physical”. Karen noticed how a lack of consonance in her small group “hindered” her own process. Karen found herself being helpful to others in her small group as opposed to being helped by others in the large group. Karen noticed how maybe unconsciously she distanced herself from certain performances as she took on a role of technician in most performances. She found herself “behind the sound and lighting desk” unable to watch closely certain performances because of what that role required from her. She found that “metaphorical distance” protective and “a little bit calming”.

Karen explained that she was thinking of using what she did in her second performance and to develop it further. She envisaged how her performance could be useful in education settings to raise awareness of dyslexia, help people “understand it better” and “experience it”. She explained how performance provided “that ability to cross boundaries and show something that you can't just describe in words”. This is precisely what also seems to summarise what Karen gained through the research.

APPENDIX 17: Summary of the post-project individual interview of Participant 6 (Jenny)

Jenny was one of the two non-British participants in the research. She was less fluent in the use of the English language than others in the group. She was in the second year of her Masters in Dramatherapy at Anglia Ruskin University, and arrived in the UK just before her course started. Jenny's cultural origin became a central theme of her first performance, especially in relation to the difficulties of understanding others and of making herself understood. This was not something that she had previously considered as being highly significant. Yet, she explained how she particularly felt the impact of language in the research group whereby a majority of participants were native English speakers. Jenny realised how hard it was for her to live in a foreign and alien environment where she found it difficult to understand others. This difficulty paralleled a difficulty to understand herself with regards to a number of issues that gained clarity as the workshop progressed, and that resulted in "useful" insights.

Jenny's experience of the workshop was enriched by gaining new understandings and overcoming language "barriers" of three different kinds: the language of drama, the language of verbal communication and the language of feelings.

Jenny explained how the most notable change for her had been to develop an understanding of why the language of drama was so important to her. Jenny described how she discovered that drama was a way for her to tell a story "without any pressure", but also how drama felt "more natural" than using words. She explained how this was something she "never noticed before". Jenny referred back to the initial interview when she talked about not really understanding why she left her career as an actress in Taiwan. She was now able to recognise that being a good actress was no longer important to her. What became more important was her ability to communicate through the language of drama. As she said of drama: "it is the way I talk, the way I express". Jenny overcame the "fear" of not being a "good enough actress", and learned that drama was no longer about an aspiration for perfection but rather an ability to "communicate" and "interact" with others.

Jenny explained how she was helped in that process by everyone in the group who she felt was very accepting of others. She did not feel judged and realised that there was no such a thing as "a bad performance". Her understanding of the use of the language of drama changed from being something to master, to becoming a means of communication. She was no longer subjected to it but learned to use it for her own benefits.

Jenny described how difficult it felt to verbalise the connections she made with other performances in the group. She explained how she connected with Karen's first performance but lacked the ability to translate it into words. She noticed a similar process in response to Nathan's performances. She realised the limits of "logical thinking", and found much easier to explore the nature of her connections through sounds, movements and the use of her own body. She understood that the language of drama gave her the means to explore how the stories of others related to her own, and to start making connections. The

embodied language of drama gave her additional resources to translate and communicate her experience. It helped overcome the difficulty of “finding the words”.

Jenny joined the project wanting to know more about the role of the witness. She explained how the audience was “very important” in her different performances. Jenny appeared surprised that a British audience commented on how they had been “touched” by her performances. She explained that this helped her to realise that emotions were “not so private”, that they could be communicated and understood regardless of background or origin. She described how an emotion “is unique but also universal”. Jenny gave the example of Sophie who, despite being English, explained to her that she could also have sometimes difficulties in communicating with others, feeling misunderstood and confused.

Jenny explained how “being witnessed” became for her more important that “being the witness”. She noticed how she gradually felt more comfortable with being witnessed, how she overcame the feeling of intrusion, and how significant that process of being seen was for her. She realised that if she wanted to “find” herself, she would need “to let people to watch” her. She described the role of the audience in the following terms: “It looks like they help me to see myself”. For Jenny, the audience appears to be an agent of meaning that enabled her to access concealed knowledge. She explained how this process was mainly revealed through feedback and discussions with others. She described how she generally tends to create stories from “instinct”, from a raw feeling, without necessarily knowing what it is about. Jenny explained how the audience helped her to recognise, name and structure her feelings. For Jenny, the audience acted as scaffolding when she didn’t always “know how to organize these feelings’.

Jenny described how, for instance, her first performance was primarily animated by a feeling of “revenge”. She explained how talking with others who recognised themselves in her performance, helped her realise that her performance was about “miscommunication” and the frustration of not being understood. This felt to her like a more pertinent theme that she recognised having repeatedly experienced. Equally, she described how her use of blindfolds in her first performance had been perceived by others watching as a possible fear of the unknown. This interpretation opened new perspectives for her that she had not previously contemplated but that nevertheless resonated with meaning. It was as if the audience helped her to lift the blindfold of her own limitations and to open her field of vision. For Jenny, the audience enriched the language of her emotions.

Jenny explained how she had already been thinking about creating a performance project in Taiwan that would “combine” the three autobiographical performances she devised in the research workshop, and two other performances she created in her dramatherapy course. This appeared to be a way for Jenny to keep practicing her newly acquired languages.

APPENDIX 18: Summary of the post-project individual interview of Participant 7 (Henry)

Henry described how he “really enjoyed” the research workshop and found it “really interesting”. Henry explained how the group had a very positive impact on his overall experience of the workshop. Henry described how he felt “everyone was really supportive”, and how he did “not expect that to be so important”. It seemed unambiguous for him that he would not have been able to devise his performances without the influence of the group, and the quality of interactions within the group. This helped Henry to produce performances that gradually became more personal, and that reflected the way in which what he initially “wanted to share” at the very beginning had “changed by the end of it”.

Henry explained how his last performance left a profound impression on him by helping him realise how his ill-health had been “quite rubbish at times”, and how difficult it was for him to talk about it. Henry explained that it “hit” him “a lot harder” than he thought it would. In his last performance, Henry “laid out” different aspects of his ill-health on a whiteboard. He faced the reality of his health displayed in front of him. This helped him realise that his health was “more serious” than what he “was giving it credit for”, and that some sort of action was needed. His last performance resulted in tangible change as, following it, he decided to cut out alcohol completely knowing that drinking was detrimental. Henry did not describe this as a life changing event but rather as a confirmation of something he already knew.

Henry’s third performance was noticeably different from his other two performances. Yet, he described these three performances as a “trilogy”. They represented a clear progression that was made possible due to a number of factors that Henry was able to identify. He recognised that he “didn’t want to share that much” in his first performance. He had no clear idea as to what to explore, and chose the relatively safe subject of his first year at university with its highs and lows. Henry was motivated by a desire to do things “differently”, and this appeared to be “really important” to him. He did not want to create a piece that would reflect what he imagined to be a traditional way of devising autobiographical work. As a result, he sang a song in front of a video projected in the background. The two other performances remained “essentially silent”. His focus became on “showing” what he was trying to say, without having to say it.

His second performance reflected an attempt to “break out of a cycle” and to go against what he might have initially contemplated at the beginning of the workshop. It was an attempt to be different again but this time in a way that would open a path for a more personal exploration. As Henry explained, it was as much “about joining a cycle” as it was about breaking it. Henry opened a new cycle that enabled him to explore and face the lived reality of his health. His second performance acted as a “bridge” that helped access and reveal a different and maybe more discounted part of him.

Henry identified three main factors that contributed to a “break” from the first performance and a change between his three performances. Henry explained how he was influenced by witnessing other performances, by interpersonal dynamics within his small group and within the larger group, and by the external audience coming to watch the performances.

Starting with the first one, Henry explained how he “was influenced by other people because that was the whole point”. He embraced the way in which the research workshop had been designed, and based his second performance on one of the first performances he witnessed. He chose Louise’s first performance because he saw a side of her that he had never seen before despite having been friend with her for a couple of years. Henry reflected on how “surprised” he had been by her performance, and “how hard it probably was for her to show that to people”. His special relationship with Louise as a friend did not totally consumed unpredictability. Despite that clear influence, Henry also said that all the other performances had an impact on him. As he put it, “there was little bits of everyone's” in his performances, “especially the last one”, and Henry felt like he “had been influenced by lots of different areas”.

The second factor had to do with how Henry experienced and related to others in the group. Henry described a very positive and “supportive” relationship with people in his small group who helped him to develop ideas. As he explained: “Having an insight into their life made me want to give them a bit more of an insight into my life”. In contrast, Henry explained how he felt “frustrated” by a member of the larger group whom he remained very careful not to name. Henry described how he felt that what that person was doing “was not personal on any level at all”. He explained how he did not “learn anything” about that person despite a reasonable expectation given that the workshop was based on autobiographical material. This “pushed” him to do the opposite of what he perceived that person did, and to think: "Do you know what? They're not doing anything personal. I want to do something really personal!" Henry’s frustration acted as an impulse in response to the annoyance he felt towards another group member who, according to him, “came in with an agenda”. Henry recalled how the discussion with the audience after the second performance gave him “the momentum” to tell that group member that he “did not think what they were doing was right”.

The third factor referred to the external audience who came to watch the second and third performances. Henry invited a number of friends, most of whom came to both performances. Henry explained that he felt there was more expectation on him in the last performance because of the friends who came to see the second one. Henry described how he “wanted to give them something different which they hadn't seen before”, and “did not want to be really repetitive”. Henry also noticed how he was also influenced by having one of his lecturers coming to see the performances. He described this as “really, really weird”. He appeared to be motivated by a desire to be seen for what he had managed to achieve. Henry remembered thinking at the time: “I'm actually really, really proud of my last performance and I want her to be here to watch it."

Henry explained how his participation in the research had reached a natural end, and how his experience through the different performances felt complete. He described how “that strain of thought” was over, and how he “couldn't really continue that chapter any further”.

APPENDIX 19: First focus group questions

1. How did you experience your own performance and the process leading up to it?

2. How did you experience other people's performances? What impact did they have on you?

3. What made you choose your material for your performance? What factors contributed to your choices? What level of self-disclosure did you choose (direct-indirect)?

4. What made you choose the form of your performance (and the possible use of metaphors)?

5. What influence did the group have on your choices? What role did the group play in your choices?

6. Did you make / introduce any changes as a result of this?

7. What influence did the other group have (as an audience) on your choices?

8. How would you describe the nature of the interactions with others within your group (support, conflict, etc)?

9. How would you describe the important moments / meaningful moments for you up to this stage?

10. Did you recognise any themes that you have connected with?

11. If anything, what did you struggle with within your group?

12. How do you approach the next stage of the project?

APPENDIX 20: Second focus group questions

1. What have been your impressions after the performances last week?

2. How did you experience the second stage of the project where you devised and performed a new autobiographical piece evoked by one or more of the other autobiographical pieces you witnessed in the first stage? In other words, how did you experience your own performance?

3. What did you become aware of as a result of that process? What kind of effect did this process have on you?

4. How would you say your second performance was different from the first one? Why do you think that is?

5. How did you experience the performances that were evoked by your own performance in the first stage?

6. What effect did these performance have on you? What effect did they have on the way you look at or approach your won experience?

7. How did you experience other people's performances that were not directly devised in response to yours? What impact did they have on you?

8. Did you notice any emergent themes as part of your process or the work of others? How do you relate to these themes?

9. What effect did the external audience have on you and the way you approached your performance?

10. How would you describe the nature and effects of the interactions with others (and there are different layers to this i.e. within your small group, the larger group, the audience) on yourself? You might like to think about this in terms of what has been helpful but also less helpful.

11. I would like to think about what you have brought to the project so far or the way you have approached it. What have been the meaningful moments for you and how would you describe the way they have emerged? What lead to these meaningful moments? What contributed to them becoming meaningful to you?

12. How do you approach the third and last stage of the project?

APPENDIX 21: Third focus group questions

1. How did you experience the different performances last week including your own? What were you left with at the end of the evening?

2. How would you describe the way in which your last performance was different from the previous ones (in form or content)? Why do you think that is?

3. I am interested in mapping and understanding your individual process. So, how would you describe the process leading to the third performance, the changes that might have occurred and where you locate the nature of these changes? Quite importantly, what do you attribute these changes to?

4. We have now reached the end of a process that started 20 weeks ago. You have devised three different performances in the context of this group? You have had a chance to perform and witness other performances? What have you discovered or become aware at the end of this process? Was it what you were initially expecting?

5. The research was designed around alternating positions of performer and witness. In other words, it was about being witness by others and being witness of others. How would you describe the effects this had on you and how would you say does it inform the nature of your personal experience?

6. Did you notice any emergent themes as part of your process or the work of others? How do you relate to these themes? How meaningful are they to you?

7. The research was designed around the notion of meaning in performance. Could you first describe the way in which you may have found new meaning(s) through performing?

8. What do you attribute these meanings to?

9. The research also suggests that meaning emerges from particular interactions and exchanges between members of a group but also from the relationship between the different performed narratives. How would you describe the way in which your relationship and exchanges with others in the group have helped create meaning?

10. How would you describe the way in which your relationship to other performances, texts or narratives may also have helped you create or reach new meaning(s)?

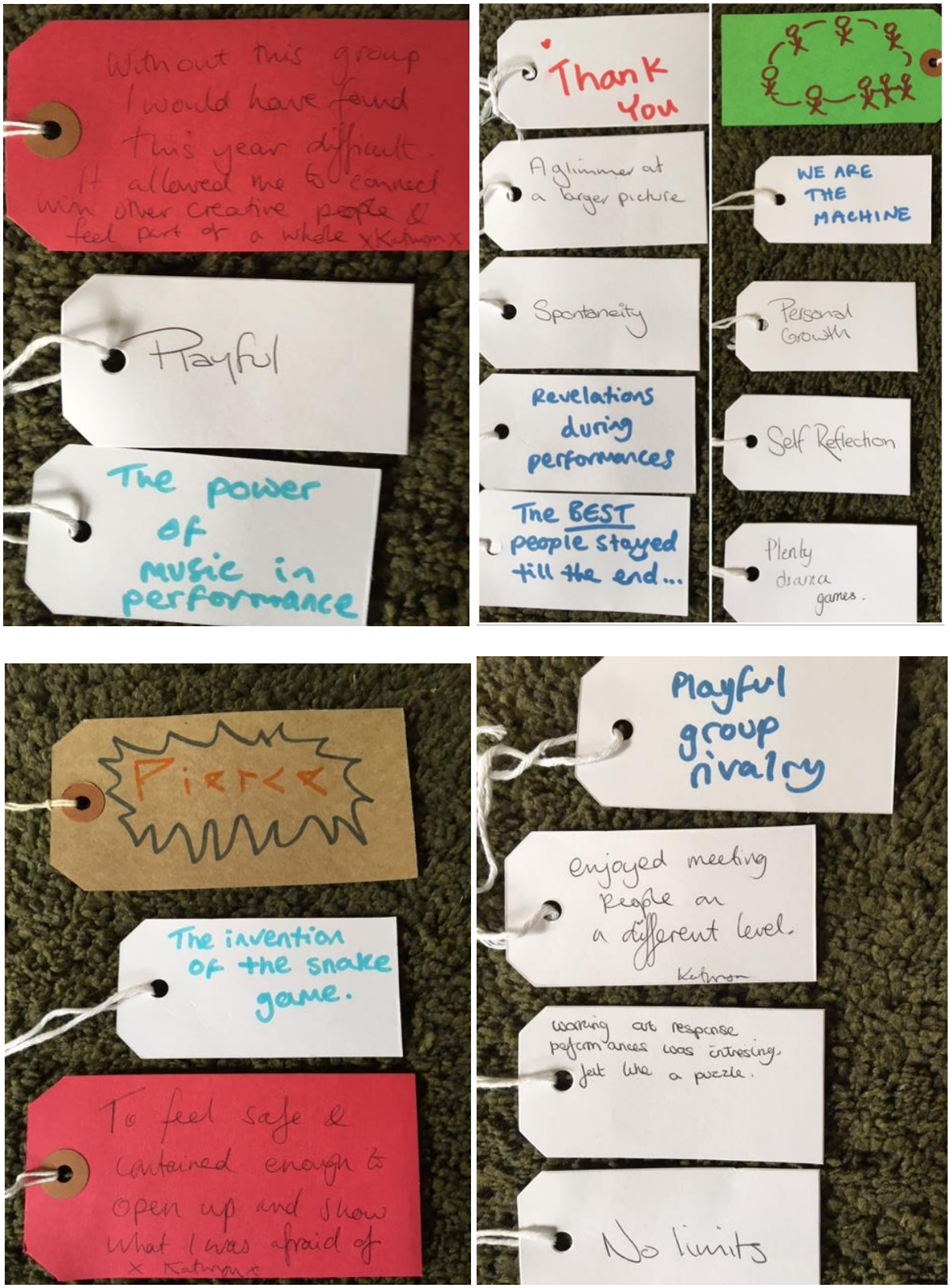
11. What were for you the most meaningful and significant moments of the project? What made them meaningful and what contributed to them becoming meaningful to you?

12. How did you experience the post performance talk and the responses of the audience?

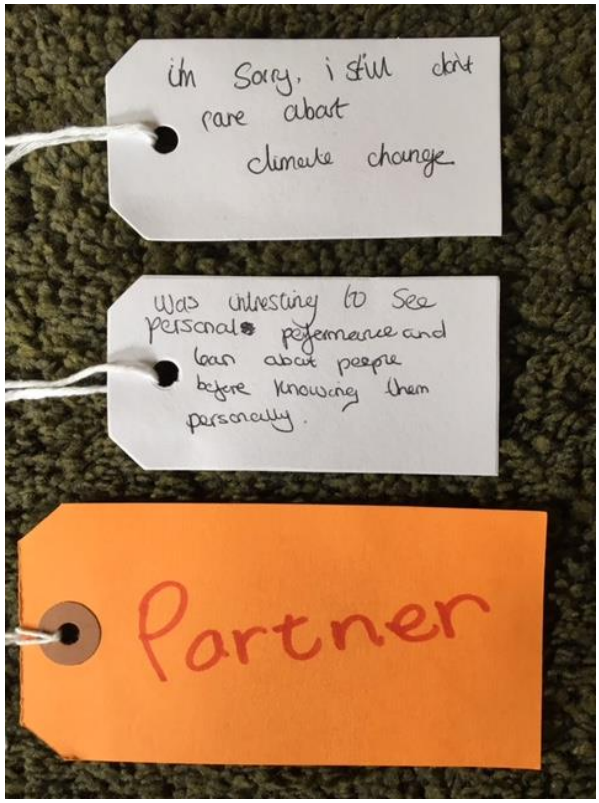
13. How would you summarize this project and how will you remember it?

APPENDIX 22: Picture of closing ritual

APPENDIX 23: Labels from closing ritual




Thank you
Jean - Francois
for allowing this
Collaboration to
happen! Kathryn
I am afraid I
Can't!
A journey
Accept


Uh Sorry, I still don't
care about
climate change
Was interesting to see
personal preference and
bias about people
before knowing them
personally.
Partner

APPENDIX 24: Moment of resonance from audience members

PERFORMANCE 1

Moment of resonance

the thing

PERFORMANCE 1

Moment of resonance

The nature of curiosity

PERFORMANCE 1

Moment of resonance

PERFORMANCE 1

Moment of resonance being read to felt calming and reminded me of being a child being read to before bedtime.

PERFORMANCE 1

Moment of resonance

1. The masks on the floor when walking into the space.
2. In the story when the girl accepts the bump

PERFORMANCE 1 Didn't want to leave

Moment of resonance and felt I was being hypnotised - didn't like that feeling

PERFORMANCE 1

Moment of resonance What was the thing?

PERFORMANCE 1

Moment of resonance

Felt like an experience that was familiar. Perhaps from a previous performance and familiar, like a primary school story.

PERFORMANCE 1 It was lovely to hear the story again and the masks to me where still the characters.

Moment of resonance

The whole thing feels calming, organic & mystical! I love the plant.

PERFORMANCE 1 ('Mummys sulky')

Moment of resonance

The story - I did hear it before at a previous performance - but it blended with more presentations this time

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance

- ripping off tape to be free. can be a glorious or overwhelming feeling.
- The contrast between with a lot of text I read and the happy music. I know I do this to ruin my sadness or anger deeper.

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance

the angst that guys girls carry about their weight appearance - breaking free is important

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance How it taken seriously?

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance Being willing to show such personal stuff takes a strong person! It was touching to be involved in your personal life

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance

binding, escape, break, frustration.

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance

When she tore the tape away. Signified accepting your past and moving on. good and bad memories

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance Retra Detrius

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance We to hope in
love as not have before
free as not fall down before.

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance Being shacked by your past and your memories and trying to remove that from how you identify yourself in the present

PERFORMANCE 2

Moment of resonance
Identity & reclaiming yourself. History & the future.

PERFORMANCE 3

Moment of resonance Maturity contrasted with adolescence. The journey of understanding ourselves in the world.

PERFORMANCE 3

Moment of resonance leaving home and creating an identity as someone separate from your family

PERFORMANCE 3

Moment of resonance face paint, lonely, born in middle class

PERFORMANCE 3

Moment of resonance the naivety before experience.

PERFORMANCE 3 memory of previous performance --

Moment of resonance life is not always perfect - bonus come & disrupt and you have to adapt

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance The earth and taking it for granted.

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance it was so nice to see you have fun & smile! It made me happy & it was fun to dance! ☺

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance rocky road → flying, being soft
stress? relieved

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance It was a really good message something good to hear!

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance When the slow dance happened, it was very sweet. It resonated because there was something very admirable + loving!

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance The dancing at the end, two people being in a moment together

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance

Do you think we're going to make it? Yes, Spouse and their spouse etc Perhaps not.

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance Sweaty armpits

PERFORMANCE 4

Moment of resonance The desire to jump on the trolley was almost overwhelming

PERFORMANCE 5 The sound scape was

Moment of resonance amazing! I really felt

so good! scared! so well done!

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance "simply the

genius / doing your best. best, best man

all the best" Tiffinnee

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance Katie Custard can!

PERFORMANCE 5 How can it be

Moment of resonance autobiographical if you're

not there? (1st 1/2)

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance allowing your own self doubt to

be released

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance

the change - and seeing the change

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance

people

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance

VERY PERSONAL. when you write on the signs you sort of have a breakthrough with yourself. very empowering

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance The power of expression

PERFORMANCE 5

Moment of resonance

everybody can
I cried
I don't know how to fix it

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance Multicultural use of tape.

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance

End – be comfortable with it. Wear it like you own it. Confidence in knowing

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance

我喜欢烟
我讨厌不烟
烟或不烟，日子都要过去
未来就要来了

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance

Memories mark birds us, can be broken and worn as a badge of honour.

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance inable to control a ~~chaotic~~ chaotic sensory overload

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance "I understand" – something very moving. I think it was the acceptance that resonated with me; especially the taped feeling constrained & resisting but then playing with tape in end

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance Alien,

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance Overcoming identity.

PERFORMANCE 6

Moment of resonance The bewilderment of a different culture & the eventuality of conforming & accepting it, as well as owning it.

PERFORMANCE 7

Moment of resonance Reflection

PERFORMANCE 7

Moment of resonance Being defined by illness

APPENDIX 25: Audience questionnaire

CO-CREATIVE SPACE: AN EVENING OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERFORMANCES

18th March 2015

Anglia Ruskin University

AUDIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: How did you personally experience the evening?

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Question 2: Did you experience any significant moments of connection with any of the performances?

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Question 3: What effects did these moments of connection have on you?

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Question 4: What will you take away from tonight performances?

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Any other comments:

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THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 26: Participants validation questionnaire

PhD research 'Co-creation of meaning in autobiographical performance in dramatherapy'
Jean-François Jacques
Anglia Ruskin University
Department of Music and Performing Arts
March 2018

I would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions based on the research documents that were sent to you.

Document 1: audio-visual summary of your performances (short film)

- How would you describe the accuracy and validity of the way in which the short film represents your experience and process in the research group?

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- Please write any additional comments you might like to make about the film:

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Document 2: transcript of your post-research individual interview

- Would you describe this transcript as accurate? YES - NO

- Please write any additional comments you might like to make about the transcript:

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Document 3: Summary of your post-research individual interview

- How would you describe the accuracy and validity of that summary of your experience and process in the research group?

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- Please write any additional comments you might like to make about that summary:

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Document 4: Analysis of the post-project individual interviews

- How would you describe the validity of the analysis of the post-project individual interviews?

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- Does the description reflect your experience?

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Document 5: Analysis of the three focus groups

- How would you describe the validity of the analysis of the three focus groups?

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- Does the description reflect your experience?

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Document 6: Juxtaposition of findings

- How would you describe the content and validity of the juxtaposition of findings?

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- Would you like to add any comments to the findings that you feel may be relevant to this research?

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Document 7: Discussion of findings

- How would you describe the content of the discussion of the findings?

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- Please add any comments on the conclusions drawn from the findings:

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE